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AUGUST 1981 NUMBER 42

THE SPACE GAMER

THE MAGAZINE OF ADVENTURE GAMING

STAR TREK

SPECIAL ISSUE

OFFICIAL ERRATA FOR *STAR FLEET BATTLES*

STAR TREK: A DIALOG APPROACH

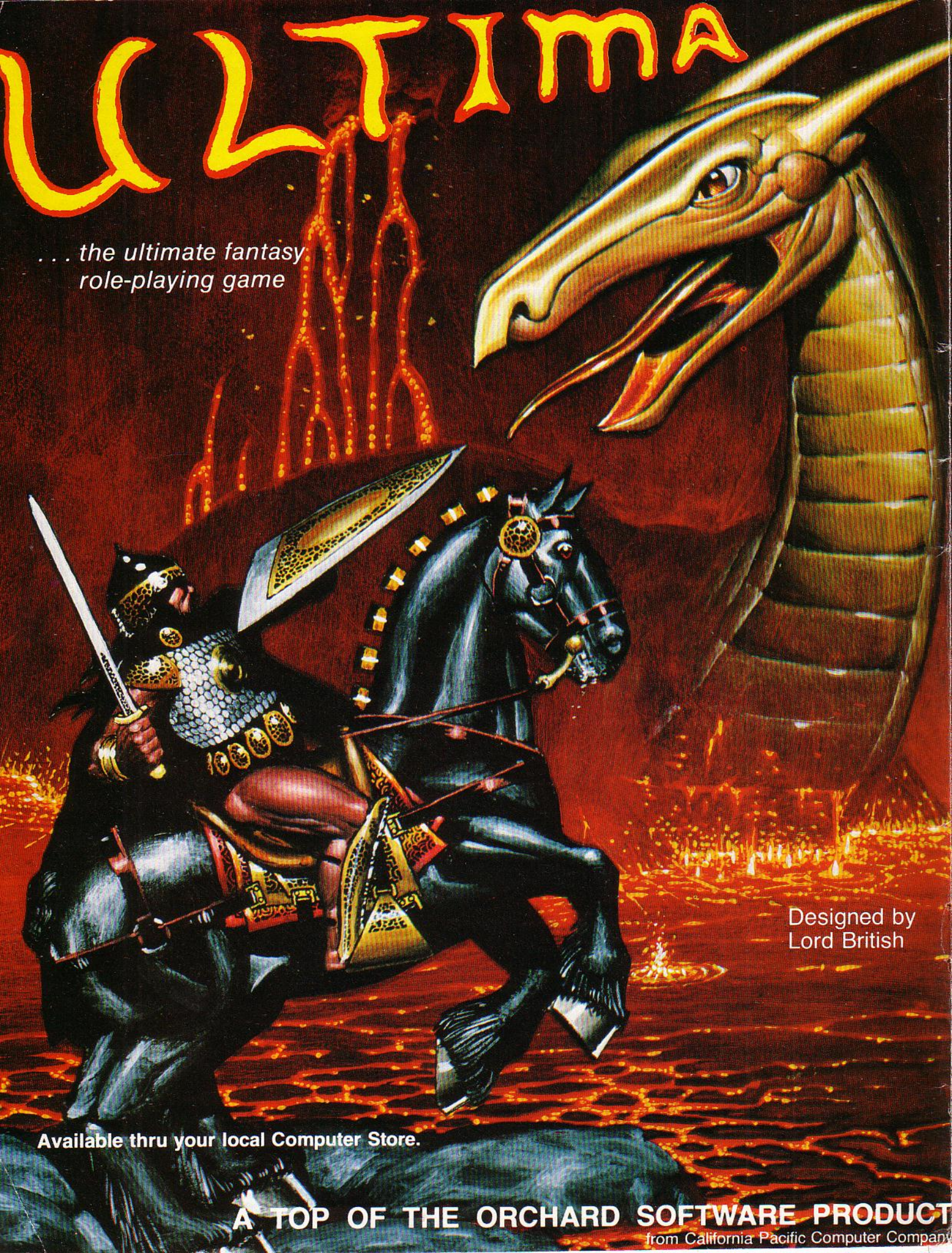
STAR FLEET BATTLE MANUAL COMBINED ARMS IN D&D

METAMORPHOSIS ALPHA NOTEBOOK

GLOSSARY OF GAME TERMS

NONHUMAN RACES

AND 8 PAGES OF REVIEWS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THE SPACE GAMER

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ART IN THIS ISSUE: K.C. Ellis: 30; Janet Jackson: 20, 21, 34; Paul Jaquays: 39; Denis Loubet: mailer cartoon, cover, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 24, 32; Richard Mather: 26; George Pratt: 2, 3; Richard Shannon: 28; Allen Varney: 40; J.D. Webster: 2. Publishers may wish to write for a copy of our Recommended Artists List.

In This Issue

This is the issue in which we pay our respects to the TV show that started the modern cycle of science fiction – and incidentally spun off a number of good games – *Star Trek.* Our articles include a retrospective of Task Force's *Star Fleet Battles* . . . AND the official errata; a review of Lou Zocchi's *Star Trek* miniatures and miniature combat rules; and an article on dialog implementation in Trek (and other) computer games.

Also: a Glossary of game advertising terms – and what they *really* mean; articles on Nonhuman Races and "Combined Arms in D&D"; and some suggestions for *Metamorphosis Alpha.*

Two regular features didn't make it this issue. *The Good Guys* will be delayed a month (J.D. is learning to fly a new plane). And "Game Master" had no questions this time. Maybe next month?

–Steve Jackson

THE SPACE GAMER

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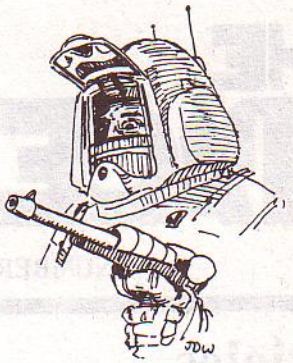
Where We're Going



Well, I don't know where *you're* going, but *I'm* going to go home and collapse.

* * * * *

The editorial staff has informed me that they will not accept the above as my "Where We're Going" this month, true though it may be. Some people have no mercy. Well, I should know . . .

It has been an interesting month at TSG. The great Austin floods threatened to wash away the office (we were advised to evacuate). However, since it was deadline time, most of us kept right on working. Some of the typesetting for this issue, and all the CAR WARS pasteup, was done to the accompaniment of a radio explaining that this area would soon be under six feet of water. It didn't happen. The biggest "disaster" turned out to be the continual phone calls from friends and subscribers, asking if we were OK.

* * * * *

We had 101 responses to our "mini-feedback" in Issue 40 . . . pretty good, considering the short time allowed for response. Results were:

COMPARISON OF ARTICLES	
Capsules	7.67
Where We're Going	7.44
News & Plugs	7.07
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Complete Games	6.24
Reader Ads	5.93
PBM Update	5.74
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OTHER QUESTIONS

Do you leave the mailer cover on your copy of TSG?
Always: 50. Sometimes: 14. Never: 36.

Why do you subscribe?
Can't find it in stores: 11. To get every issue: 35. Cheaper: 11. Other: 8. A&B: 1. A&C: 1. A&D: 1. B&C: 20. B&D: 1. C & D: 2. B, C, & D: 3. All 4 reasons: 7.

How do you buy SJ Games products?
By mail: 34. From stores: 7. Both: 13. Never bought any (gasp!): 16.

Why do you want us to avoid running historical game articles?
Not interested: 28. Other magazines cover them: 40. Play them, but don't want to read about them: 10. What's a historical game?: 1. A&B: 9. B&C: 4. B&D: 1. (Three readers said they'd like to see some historical games. Sorry about that, y'all.)

Interestingly, the news-type features seemed to score ahead of most things. Capsule reviews were highest of all – no surprise there. Computer and *Traveller* material rated surprisingly low; analysis of the results revealed that this was due to a very large number of "1" and "2" responses from the people who have NO interest in the subjects, counterbalancing "8" and "9" responses from their fans.

We were pleased to see that there was only one rating below the "5" median. Even assuming that the respondents were among the most dedicated readers, that was good news.

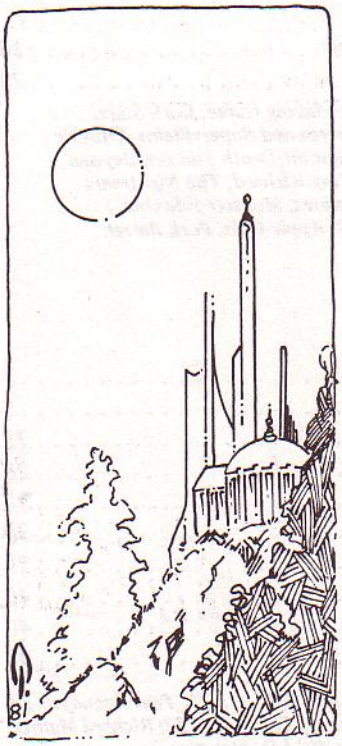
The free-response section brought some very good suggestions for future articles. If anyone out there wants to write them, go right ahead! Samples:

Stellar Conquest ships worked out in *Traveller* terms, with deck plans;

Strategy articles in particular – especially for *Imperium, TFT, Trillion Credit Squadron, Freedom in the Galaxy, Star Fleet Battles* (more!), *StarWeb*, etc;

Record sheets designed for games that need them and don't have them;

Next Issue



Our September issue will include a report from Pacific Origins;

A story by Timothy Zahn;

A companion article on bound spirits in D&D;

A survey of science fiction and fantasy variants for "Diplomacy";

A featured review of the computer game "Sword Thrust,"

The winner of the G.E.V. art contest;

More nonhuman races;

And (time and space permitting) a complete game – one of the strangest you've ever seen.

Solitaire rules for various games – and a general article on solitaire play.

So start writing!

* * * * *

Canadian gamers please take note: We can now accept checks drawn on Canadian banks . . . but PLEASE make all checks in U.S. dollars, as we cannot be responsible for fluctuations in the rates of exchange.

* * * * *

Everything that was scheduled for Origins release date *actually made it to Origins.* This is something of a miracle. I have been given to understand that release dates, in this industry, are rarely if ever met. Certainly there have been a lot of times in the past month when I didn't think we'd make it. But KILLER, CAR WARS, UNDEAD, and GAME DESIGN all made it to the show – and the pre-ordered copies have already been shipped. For the record, the feat would not have been possible without the hard work of Elton Fewell, Forrest Johnson, Aaron Allston, Elisabeth Barrington, Monica Stephens, and Chad Irby – that is, the whole SJ Games/TSG staff.

I left one name off that list, because he deserves his own paragraph. That's Denis Loubet, whose art you have already seen on the Cardboard Heroes and on several TSG covers. Denis did an incredible amount of work for this set of releases – like (a) the cover for UNDEAD; (b) all the counters (in FULL COLOR) for both UNDEAD and CAR WARS; (c) a lot of the interior art for GAME DESIGN, and (d) ALL the interior (and cover) art for KILLER. That last was done under *very* tight deadline – but I think the art makes the book. Look at the cover and you'll agree.

The convention response made all the work worthwhile, though. CAR WARS and KILLER were both BIG hits . . . we sold every copy we took! UNDEAD and GAME DESIGN also sold very respectably. And the KILLER tournament that we ran drew a lot of attention. Of 65 entrants, only three survived the 20-hour game: Garry Cohen (with 14 kills!), Bob Welch, and "Roger Takahashi," who was actually Susan Kersnar.

Now, if YOU will all go out and buy seven copies of everything, I can give all the staffers the raises they deserve.

* * * * *

Something new in the magazine this month: a subscriber bonus. If you'll look at the inside back of your mailer cover, you'll see some extra CAR WARS components to add to the interest (and challenge) of the game. What? No mailer cover? Well, obviously you don't subscribe . . . Pity, that. We'll run other subscriber extras on the mailer cover from time to time, as good ideas come up. If you have any suggestions, let us know.

And this is the second month of our new column, *PBM Update*. Feedback from readers has just started on last month's column, but it seems to be favorable. And response from the PBM companies has been VERY good – lots of interesting data, and (so far) no pointless "hype" at all – so we're letting ourselves hope that it will be a success.

* * * * *

As to the next batch of new releases: Look for a new set of Cardboard Heroes in the fall. Actually, look for a batch of four sets. Denis is working on a set of 40 Undead (skeletons, ghouls, and other nasties) and two sets of assorted Monsters. And Paul Jaquays is coming along on a set of *Traveller* figures. By next month I should have a better idea of the timing on all those.

New game projects: There are several possibilities. My own COUP is about ready for another round of blindtesting, and I've got a tactical space game that has possibilities. Allen Varney (of *Pond War* and *Igdrip* fame) is working on an interesting fantasy game system. It may show up in the pages of TSG, or it may be a separate release. W. G. Armintrout, who designed *Hot Spot*, has a very interesting space combat game in the works. And there are a few other things in the wings.

Miniatures: Masters are already being made for a set of CAR WARS miniatures. It's too early to say when they'll be available – but available they will be, and almost certainly before the year is out.

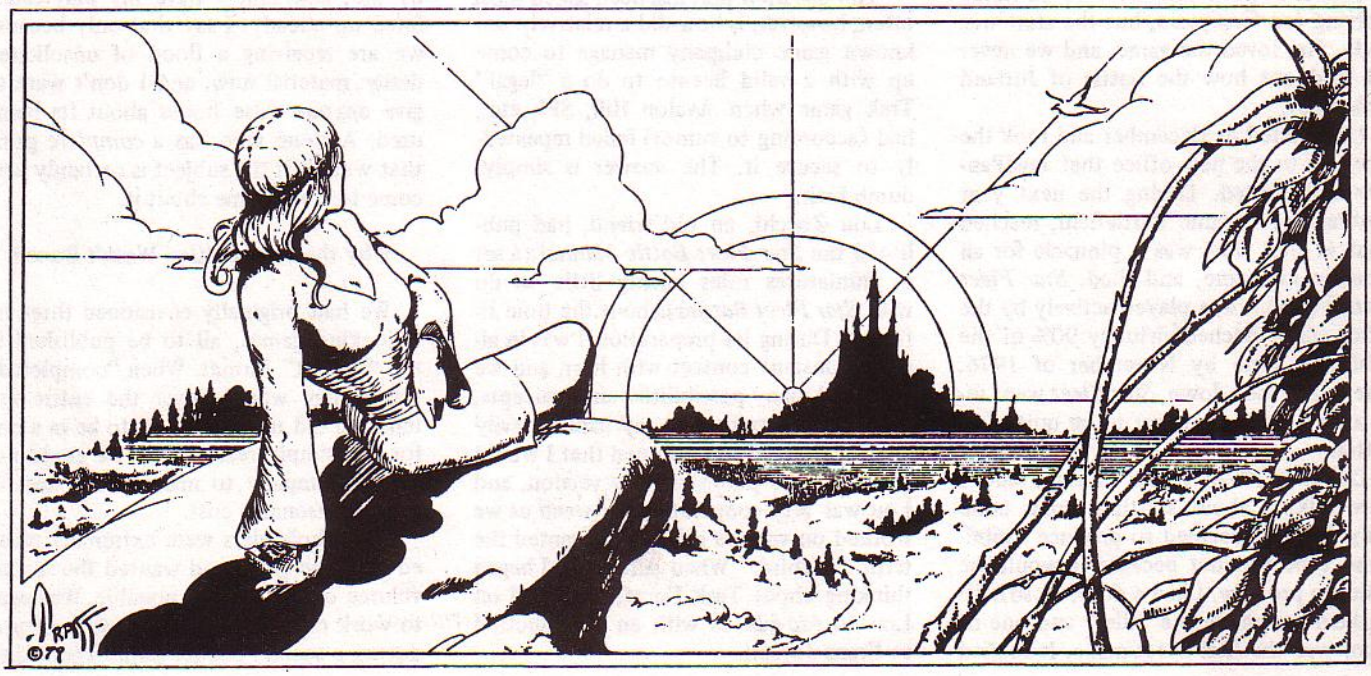
* * * * *

Now I *am* going to go home and collapse. See you next month.

– Steve Jackson

GAME MASTER

Although the Mini-Feedback shows that this is one of our most popular features, we received NO questions this month . . .



Retrospect:

Star Fleet Battles

by Steve Cole

The design of *Star Fleet Battles* began during 1975 while I was completing my senior year at Texas Tech. Jim Brown (my primary gaming partner of the time) and I were playing a lot of *Jutland*. Life in the dorm had resolved itself into a routine that included homework in the afternoon, *Star Trek* re-runs from 4:30 to 5:30, dinner, a couple of hours of gaming, and then a trip to one of the local student hangouts. One afternoon I was studying the *Jutland* battle that was in progress on my floor (left from the previous evening) when the re-run of the day came on. I began to consider the possibility of doing a space game on the *Jutland* system. JagdPanther was in operation at the time, and I had vague thoughts that I could somehow get a license for the game.

By the time Jim came by to collect me for dinner, I had a Federation CA and a Klingon D7 fighting it out. In the brief space of an hour long re-run, I had two SSD's, the proportional movement system, and the charts for phasers and disruptor bolts. All were to change drastically within a week and were to continue evolving for five years, but the start was made. Jim loved the game, and we never did find out how the Battle of Jutland turned out.

I graduated in December and took the game up to the new office that JagdPanther had rented. During the next year JagdPanther became Battlefield, reached what at that time was a pinnacle for an amateur magazine, and died. *Star Fleet Battles* (which was played actively by the office staff) reached virtually 90% of the published state by November of 1976. When JP closed down, *Star Fleet* went into a box, but was never to be quite forgotten.

October 1978: Allen Eldridge and I were talking about starting a new company. We had decided to produce a mini-game type product because it would be easier to produce. I had a dozen or so half-finished designs in the "file," and one of them was the Star Fleet game. It looked to be in pretty good shape and easy to get into print. How wrong I was about that!

Why We Did Such a Complex Game

There was never any question, from the moment we penciled it in on our list of four potential games, that *Star Fleet Battles* would be a hit. While it might have been more profitable (or at least profitable faster) to get a simpler rules system into print as soon as we could, that was never considered. If we were going to do *Star Fleet Battles* (which we intended to be the definitive Star Fleet game), we were going to do it right. We spent months poring through every official and unofficial source we could find to cram every possible aspect of the subject universe into the game. Needless to say, it did not all fit. We have had a few complaints about how we did things, but no one has complained about something not being in there.

How We Got the License

The question that has been asked most often, however, is how did a relatively unknown game company manage to come up with a valid license to do a "legal" Trek game when Avalon Hill, SPI, etc., had (according to rumor) failed repeatedly to secure it. The answer is simply, dumb luck.

Lou Zocchi, an old friend, had published the *Star Fleet Battle Manual* (a set of miniatures rules having little to do with *Star Fleet Battles*) about the time JP folded. During its preparation I was in almost constant contact with him, and we discussed many possibilities and concepts, since I was working on my game heavily at that time. It was assumed that I would eventually be publishing my version, and Lou was very cooperative. Between us we worked on various rules and invented the term "Warbird." When Allen and I began thinking about Task Force, we called on Lou to provide us with an introduction to Franz Joseph.

Franz was, almost instantly, not interested in licensing us to do our game. A distinguished gentleman with a long career, he had a strong personal aversion to war and violence. He simply did not want to have anything to do with the publication of a "war" game. Lou's miniature rules, he explained, were published solely to increase the sales of the small plastic models, and Franz wasn't too happy that it was so combat oriented. I tried to change his mind and was treated to a long-winded dissertation on his feelings and on his professional reputation. Franz is a licensed professional engineer, and he had been involved in designing several airplanes (among them, I believe, the F-111). When he reached that point, I mentioned that I was also an engineer (note the "PE" for "Professional Engineer" that follows my name in many of my game credits), and it happened that we both knew some of the same people in the national societies.

That proved to be the turning point. Franz asked me that magic question: "Just what is a wargame anyway, and how does it work?" About $30 worth of long-distance phone calls later, I had managed to answer his question and convince him of our sincere desire to publish a "systems" oriented game. The license was forthcoming (after several lawyers became wealthy), and the game reached print. The "non-violent combat rules" bear witness to the involved negotiations.

Our license has since been renewed and extended to include computer and role-playing games. I should comment that the licensing arrangement with me, Task Force, and Franz calls for virtually all of the design work to be done by me, and that I have my playtesters lined up already. I say that only because we are receiving a flood of unsolicited design material now, and I don't want to give anyone false hopes about its being used. Anyone who has a *complete* game that would fit the subject is certainly welcome to contact me about it.

Why the First Edition Wasn't Boxed

We had originally envisioned three interlocking games, all to be published in the "pocket" format. When "completed" this trilogy would cover the entire system. We did not plan for it to be in a box for the simple reason that we could not find a company to make our boxes for us at a reasonable cost.

Our wholesalers were extremely pleased with the game and wanted the second volume out as soon as possible. We began to work on it, with the intention of producing a second pocket game. Then Allen

Eldridge (who was always the business brains of JagdPanther and Task Force) found a source for boxes, and we changed our entire plan. Instead of an "add-on" we began looking at a complete revision. For production reasons, and to make the new game easier to grasp for veterans of the old one, we tried to keep the original body of rules intact and added new sections to it. It might have been better, ultimately, to have integrated the basic and original rules, but things seem to have worked out well enough. The page protectors and grease pencils were the idea of some of our playtesters. They never bothered to mention it to us; we saw them using them in the playtest room one evening and included them in the boxed version.

Some people complained about having to buy the same parts over again, and a few people I have met never realized that the boxed version has twice as many ships and scenarios as the pocket game. Store owners told us, however, that people were buying the box, then returning to buy the pocket game solely to get extra counters.

Truth and the Speed of Light

I suppose that the biggest hole in the game section is the speed of light. We considered and developed two different game systems. One of them had the speed of light correct, the other one was able to match the few combat incidents shown on the shows. In the end, we decided to make the game match the originals. Any complaints about the speed of light should be directed to the studios, not to us.

The Growth of the Genre

The game has grown considerably beyond the bounds of the films and published novels. The new races that we have added (Kzintis, Hydrans, and more that are coming) fulfilled roles in a dynamic balance of power. New ship classes have filled holes in the fleets based on missions we assume would be there to be done.

Perhaps the most controversial addition that we have made to the game universe has been the fighters and carriers. This began innocently enough in the pocket game with a low-powered phaser mounted in shuttles to provide some additional use for them. Our "authority" for doing this came from a passage in one novel when a young ensign demanded to take a shuttle down to a planet and use its phaser to settle the hash of a particularly obnoxious antagonist. In another novel a shuttlecraft that was approaching rendezvous with its cruiser sighted a homing torpedo and destroyed it with a phaser.

From that modest beginning the situation developed into the Kzinti fighter and its CV mothership. When the boxed version appeared, we wanted to include a lot more drones and small targets. The Kzintis (who I had decided were drone freaks) were the logical choice. The spirit of individual combat prowess and courage that the heroes aspire to seemed to call for the fighters. They were included and became a howling success.

After that the situation rapidly got out of hand. By the time the second expansion appears, everyone will have fighters and carriers. Some people complain that we have voided the original concept of the game universe (where workhorse cruisers are the basis of all war, exploration, and peacekeeping) and turned *Star Trek* into *Battlestar Galactica*. While that may be true, there are a lot of players around who love them. All I can say is that if you don't like them no one is forcing you to use them, and the game expansions aren't costing you any more because they are in there.

Player Additions

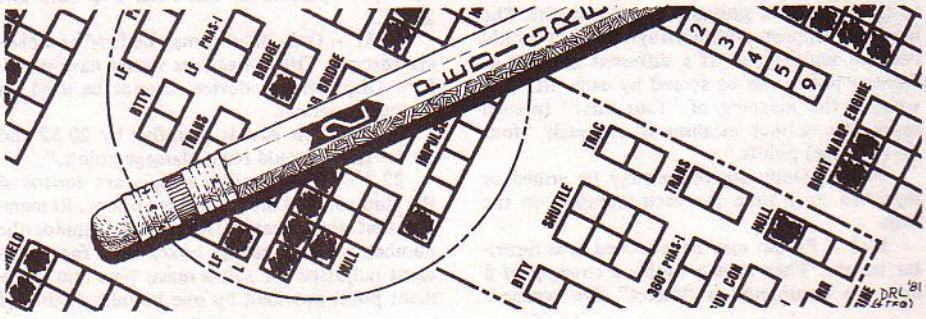
From the moment *Star Fleet Battles* was published (or more correctly from the time we gave it to the playtesters), we have received countless letters containing anything from complete new scenarios, ships, and rules to half-formed (or half-baked) ideas and suggestions. Much of this material duplicated things we had already done but not published. For example, we have had a Gorn Dreadnought in playtest for over a year, but when I mentioned in the designer's notes of Expansion No. 1 that we would be publishing one in Expansion No. 2 we received 15 of them in the mail. A lot of it duplicated things from other players. Some of it was totally new, and other submissions provided complete rules sections that we had always intended to write but had never gotten around to.

It may be unusual in the industry, but I have never been too stingy about design credit. I think that it looks good to have a couple of dozen people listed in the expansions for the various elements that they have sent in. If someone has sent in a ship similar to one that I have already designed, it is very likely that his name, not mine, will go on the one that is finally published. This tends to make a lot of good will and turn the game into a group experience. It also keeps a flow of ideas coming in.

Where Is It Going?

I cannot really be sure. There is enough material that has already been analyzed and catalogued for two expansions, and that much more has not even been looked at. (If you want to improve your chances of getting your submission published, send me scenarios. I use almost every one that I receive.) It appears certain that two more expansions will be published, one this fall and the other next spring. By the time I sit down to work on them, we will have twice that much material to sift through. Someday in the dim future I hope to sit down and digest everything into a single rulebook (with the rules renumbered and put in order) and then republish the game as a complete entity. If that is ever done, the rulebook will be available as a separate item for people who don't want to buy a whole new game. Considering the lifespan of game components, however, there will be a strong majority of people who do buy a complete new package.

Other games produced under the license will be coming along in time. *Federation Space* (after a year of delays that are entirely my fault – I am just too busy with my family and career to finish it on schedule) will probably be printed this fall. A computer version of *Star Fleet Battles* has been under development for some time and may be printed this year. *Computer Star Fleet Battles* will reinforce the theory that only the original designer can do it right. *Star Fleet Marines* (ground combat), *Federation Science Officer* (planet exploration), *The Pirates of Orion* (an interesting title), *Federation* (role playing), *Star Fleet Command* (a simplified combat game), and *The First Romulan War* (also known as *Sub-light Battles*) are under consideration and may be printed over the next five or ten years.



Official Errata for *Star Fleet Battles*

*This material is to be published in **Star Fleet Battles Expansion Module No. 2** and includes some new material in additon to the errata. Some of this material has been published, or used as corrections, in the second edition of **Expansion Module No. 1**. If your copy has the bottom half of page 38 blank, you have a first edition.*

The current edition of the errata sheet has been prepared and is held on computer disc memory. Each question that we are asked is answered, and if that answer entails a new rule, or a clarification of an old one, it is entered. Eventually, certain selected individuals (who have been designated as on the "Star Fleet Select Committee") evaluate this material on a rule by rule basis before it is "officially" published. Until that time it can be considered "official." (Members of the committee have already been selected. No volunteers are needed.)

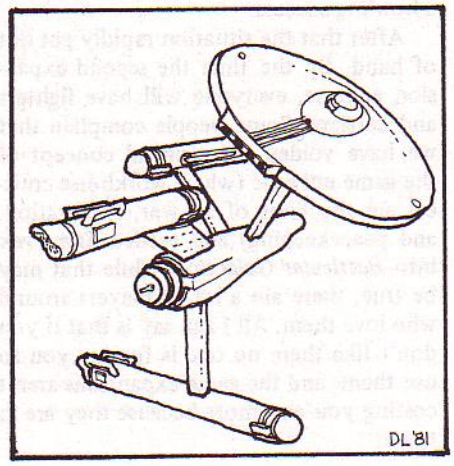
When sending new material, observe the following guidelines:

1. Enclose an SASE if you expect an answer.

2. Put your name on every piece of paper. Include at least one piece of paper with name, address, phone number, and a list of what you sent in.

3. Put any questions on a separate sheet that has your name and address (and is not the only sheet with your name and address if you sent other material). Write "QUESTIONS" in large letters at the top of it so that it won't get tossed into the box of ideas for the next expansion.

*4. All new material (ships, scenarios, etc.) becomes the property of Task Force Games and the Amarillo Design Bureau. Under no circumstances will anyone be paid for any expansion material submitted for **Star Fleet Battles**. People sending in material will be credited in the expansion if it is used. Major contributors will receive a copy of the expansion.*



5.1.9 – Ships that have an odd number of Type III phasers are presumed to have a special small capacitor that can hold an extra half unit of power and use it later. Thus, 13 Type III phasers would use 7 units of power one turn and 6 the next.

7.51 – The "Shuttle" result in row 8 column G should read "Lab."

7.56 – In some cases (specifically drones, fighters, and shuttles) it is said that destruction occurs on the fourth (or whatever) "hit." This refers to "hit points" or "damage points," not to the number of phasers that scored hits. The usage is inappropriate in many cases but should become self-evident. If a different number of damage points can be scored by each hit, then what is the meaning of "four hits?" In such cases, the correct meaning is obviously "four hit (damage) points."

14.1 – Only one probe may be armed or launched at a time for each launcher on the ship.

14.5 – Probes may be launched as anti-matter bombs. They have a warhead strength of 8 and are considered a "direct" fire weapon. They must be armed using the same procedures as a photon torpedo. Accuracy is as per 14.2. Only one probe may be armed at a time, and if a probe is being armed for firing as an anti-matter bomb no informational/research probes may be launched. While probes may be launched in any direction, anti-matter bombs may only be launched directly ahead (in the row of hexes extending directly ahead of the ship). (Note: This rule is issued in response to wide demand from the players that the probe launcher be used as a weapon. While, in reality, it could be used as such (using the procedure above) it is intended for use as a scientific tool and use as a weapon should only be considered in the most desperate of circumstances, not as a routine matter. It is suggested that such use only be allowed if half of a ship's weapons have been eliminated, or if all forward firing weapons have been eliminated.)

16.3 – It costs 2 units of energy to fire a Type IV phaser.

17.812 – Two should be "subtracted" from the die roll, not "added."

18.6 – The range of the disruptors on the T-4 battle pod is 30.

19.31 – While the proper rules will be put in their proper places, the comment should be made that launching drones and shuttlecraft could also be done on any impulse, using the concept expressed in this rule. See 60.5 and 27.81.

19.61 – Only phasers may be fired at a plasma torpedo. Other weapons would have no effect. Displacement devices cannot be used on plasma torpedoes.

20.7 – This rule is modified by 20.52 and 60.4. "Hits" should read "damage points."

22.3 – If all impulse engines are destroyed the ship can still move by warp power. Remember that the equation for speed includes the number of warp engine boxes used for movement (adjusted for ship's mass) plus one movement point provided by one impulse engine. If you don't have impulse engines your speed is limited to whatever warp power you have.

26.2 – For every fourth boarding party, subtract one from the die roll when determining if the mutiny has occurred (a result less than one is considered to be one) and add one to the die roll when determining if it was successful.

26.5 – The boarding parties created by this rule are not necessarily those originally organized, but include additional ship's personnel temporarily drafted into the marines because of the emergency.

27.1 – This may be modified by specific rules in later sections.

27.62 – The 1 in the "Hits on Ship" column on the 1-2 row should be a "0." The 99+ on the last row should be "96+."

27.63 – The launching of a suicide shuttle or of a drone during the same launch phase as the launching of a Wild Weasel constitutes the firing of a weapon and voids the WW. The problem is that the ship's tracking systems must remain locked onto the target while a drone (and a suicide shuttle uses the drone rules) is in flight, and the plasma torpedo could lock onto that energy emanation. If launching a Wild Weasel, the tracking system must be turned off, all "lock ons" are lost and all drones/suicide shuttles in flight are lost.

27.7 – "Hits" should read "damage points."

27.81 – Players may wish to experiment with rules allowing them to launch and recover shuttles during any impulse of the turn.

27.91 – A ship may not recover any shuttles if it is travelling faster than the maximum speed of the shuttle unless the ship has one working tractor beam per shuttle recovered during a given turn, in which case the ship may be moving at up to twice the speed of the shuttle. Power must have been provided to the tractor beams and a successful tractor must be made.

32.61 – A shuttle may be launched with a single pilot. It does not have to have an entire crew unit. A shuttle could carry two (or perhaps even three) crew units, but this would place them in extreme discomfort and strain the life support systems on all but the shortest journeys, and any violent maneuvering (or being hit by any weapons) would result in serious injuries to the crew units since there are not enough places to "strap in." These situations are outside of the scope of the game, and can be handled by the players in a manner suited to the situation at hand. If this rule is used in scenario 130.0 the number of personnel on the planet should be tripled.

32.62 – The last crew unit on a ship cannot be killed by hits scored against the ship. (There would also always be some survivors.)

33.0 – Rules are in preparation but unavailable at this time to change the loss rate for boarding parties so that losses will be more proportionate to losses of regular crew units. For the time being, simply ignore the first four boarding party casualties called for.

35.31 – A ship may self-destruct even if doing so produces only a minor explosion (enough to destroy the ship but not harm anyone else). This would happen in the case of a severely crippled ship that simply wanted to avoid the ignominy of capture.

35.4 – Ignore cloaking devices in calculating the range for self-destruct blast effects.

38.3 – Boom counters are now provided for the Klingons.

38.8 – The turn mode for the saucer is the same as for the Warbird.

41.2 – The cloaking device is either "on" or "off" for the entire turn. It is turned on during the energy allocation segment of a given turn,

and may be turned off or left on during the energy allocation segment of the following turn or turns. If the device was on during the previous turn, and it is to be on during the current turn, then its operation is considered to be continuous (i.e., the position of the cloaked ship is not revealed at the end of each turn).

41.41 – For additional challenge, the Romulan player may install cloaking devices on other types. The cost of operation would be: Base Station 20, Starbase 50, Fleet Repair Dock 10.

41.7 – A cloaked ship may launch shuttles. While this would give away its location, enemy ships still could not lock on to the cloaked ship. A cloaked ship cannot pick up shuttles without being detected. The ship would have to broadcast a homing signal for the shuttles, and this signal could be detected and used for targeting. A cloaked ship can be fired at and locked on to during the impulse in which it picks up a shuttle, and during the impulse before and after the impulse in which the pick up is made.

41.8 – When firing a seeking weapon (drone, suicide shuttle, or plasma torpedo) at a cloaked ship, or at a ship that cloaks while the weapon is in flight, there is a limited possibility of maintaining contact long enough for the weapon to hit. See below.

41.81 If a ship that is guiding or firing a seeking weapon had a Sensor Lock-on on the previous turn, there is a possibility that it can maintain that lock-on during the current turn. This is determined at the start of the turn, after the targeting ship announces that it has cloaked (or remained cloaked). This probability is determined with the following formula:

P = S + ECCM - ECM - RF - 2

The terms of this equation are defined as follows:

P = probability of keeping lock-on
S = sensor rating of firing ship
ECM = electronic counter-measure strength of target ship
ECCM = electronic counter-counter-measure strength of firing ship
RF = range adjustment factor as follows:

True Range	RF
0	-1
1-4	0
5-10	1
11-15	2
16-20	3
21-30	4
31-40	5
41+	6

The player controlling the firing ship rolls a single die. If the resulting number is equal to or less than the probability number determined by the equation the lock-on has been retained.

42.31 – The mine can be dropped while the cloaking device is on.

42.51 – Mines can be detonated by minesweepers (see 122.3). Non-minesweepers can detonate the mine by the same method, but they must move into the same hex as the mine, establish a "lock on" (with 2 added to the die roll and any result over 6 a failure), and score 8 points of phaser hits.

42.81 – If more than one mine is in a given hex, any ship entering it must roll for each mine. If more than one detonates, the damage is cumulative but is not part of the same volley.

42.82 – Once the seeking weapon has entered the hex occupied by the target ship, there is a substantial probability that it will not be able to find the target. Roll one die on the following chart to determine the effect of the intercept.

Die Roll	Result
1 or 2	weapon hits target
3	weapon explodes near target, ½ damage
4	weapon explodes near target, ¼ damage
5 or 6	weapon explodes far from target, no damage

44.5 – The base station is, simply put, an abysmal failure. For the time being, increase its power to 20 units (try 30 if that doesn't do it). Perhaps someone out there will take pity and design a new one.

48.4 – The Planet Crusher's close-in defense system has a 3/6ths chance of destroying fighters/shuttles. The Planet Crusher will fire on a fighter/shuttle whenever it comes within two hexes, or whenever it fires a direct-fire weapon at it. Beyond 4 hexes, the chance of destroying the fighter/shuttle is reduced to 2/6ths, and beyond 7 hexes to 1/6th.

56.3 – Sub-light shuttles are destroyed by the second laser hit.

56.4 – Atomic missiles are destroyed by the first laser hit.

58.21 – The use of the 20, 10, or 6 impulse charts is for the convenience of the players. If any player insists on using the 32 impulse chart (so that he will have a particular firing opportunity) then it must be used.

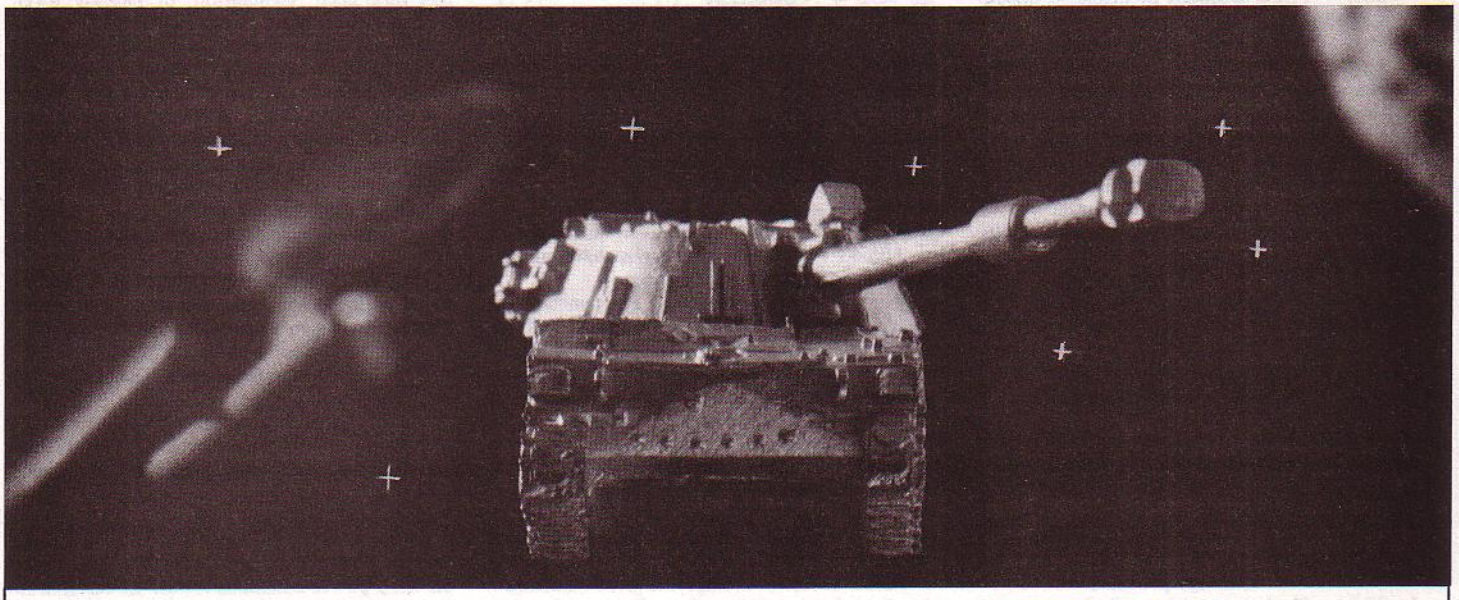
58.543 – The nimble Orion CR ships and Tholian PC's, don't have to roll for the first HET (High Energy Turn).

58.56 – Players have asked what happens if a ship enters the hex of an enemy ship and then performs a HET (i.e., what shield are they facing). This question is irrelevant since the drone/shuttle launch phase is over and the ship would move forward one hex before it had the opportunity to fire weapons.

59.421 – All fighters must have their target in the FA firing arc to have a "lock on" for purposes of firing or guidance drones.

59.43 – "Hits" should read "Damage Points."

59.x – (additional shuttle rules) Fighters



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and shuttles may self-destruct or surrender just as ships may, should the tactical situation warrant. The explosion of a fighter causes one point of damage in the hex where it self-destructs only. Shuttles remaining in play after all friendly ships have been destroyed, captured, or forced to disengage, are presumed to be destroyed. Fighters may not disengage by acceleration, but could effectively do so by simply moving away from enemy ships. However, fighters have a limited range and the pilot will die a lonesome death if there is not a planet, base, or ship somewhere relatively close.

Fighters may not be the only ship type in fleet scenarios because of their range limits. There must be a carrier, base (of some type) or planet with launch/base facilities present for fighters to be there in the first place.

All fighters may make tactical warp maneuvers. Fighters and shuttles do not have to move at their maximum speed, but may move slower if they wish.

Fighters carrying drones may not launch them during the drone and shuttlecraft launch phase in which they themselves are launched. If using the "launch on any impulse" rules the drones cannot be launched until half of the turn has elapsed. (The first 3, 5, 10 or 16 impulses. They could fire them on impulses 4, 6, 11, or 17.)

60.311 – ATG drones launched within 8 hexes are considered to have picked up their target if it is within the FA arc of the drone at the beginning of the drone's second impulse.

60.5 – Players particularly interested in drones might allow them to be launched during any impulse. Some form of planning must be used, however, due to the targeting system. Players must designate, in advance and in writing, the target for each drone to be fired during the planning phase.

60.6 – Firing weapons at drones is dependent primarily on the ability of sighting devices to keep up with the rapidly moving and maneuvering targets. In the past, fire has been limited to phasers for simplicity. This being anything but a simple game, the following revisions are now allowed.

60.61 – Phasers, plasma torpedoes, drones, displacement devices, anti-drones, and the mauler operate normally against drones.

60.62 – Photon torpedoes, disruptors, T/R beams, fusion beams: add two to the die roll when determining hits/damage.

64.4 – Klingon Dreadnought booms and Federation Dreadnought saucers have turn mode "C."

69.6 – If a ship moves through a web by expending the required amount of power, the web itself is not affected.

70.3 – Two different ships in different hexes (but both within the firing arc) may be placed in stasis. The cost is double the cost of holding a single ship, plus one extra energy point per turn. Similarly, three ships could be held in stasis at a cost of triple the normal cost plus three extra units of energy per turn.

70.9 – Starbases and base stations cannot be placed in stasis because of their positional stabilizers.

73.1 – There is no practical way in which a ship could destroy a planet. Small asteroids and moonlets could be destroyed using the procedures of 93.4.

76.0 – The C8/9 can accelerate by 15.

78.0 – The plasma torpedo on the KF5R fires forward.

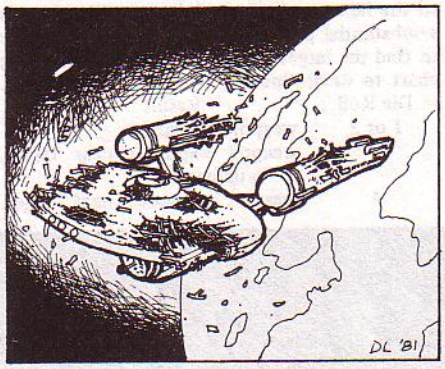
82.1 – Damage procedure for star bases: When a volley of hits penetrates one of the shields of a star base, use the following procedure for each damage point in turn.

1. Determine what system was hit.
2. Apply the hit (if possible) to the module facing that shield.
   2a. Note that hull hits on a module after the hull boxes of that module are destroyed are applied to the ships inside that module. These hits are resolved separately as a hit on the no. 1 shield of the ship.
3. If there is no system of that type remaining in that module, the hit penetrates into the main body of the starbase looking for that type of system to inflict itself upon. Hits reaching the main body first strike armor. The upper row of armor boxes is struck by hits on shields 6-1-2, the lower by hits on shields 3-4-5.
4. If there is no system of that type in the main body, move to the next column on the damage allocation chart and repeat the steps above.

90.41 – The Moray Eel of Space cannot be caught by a tractor beam. The monster can attack any given target only once per turn, but could attack a different target each impulse. The Moray Eel has a close in defense system like the Planet Crusher (48.4).

93.2 – Hex 3634 should be 3632.

103.11 – The two boxes on the Intruder SSD represent two separate displacement devices. They are operated independently of each other.



103.41 – The word "displayed" should read "displaced."

103.43 – Plasma torpedoes cannot be displaced. Drones, monsters, etc., can be displaced.

105.43 – Only PA panels that have energy in them can dump power to space.

105.44 – If a ship with PA panels self-destructs, the power held in the PA panels is added to the calculation described in 35.3.

105.7 – Power absorbers cannot absorb power from webs.

105.8 – The batteries on Andromedan ships can hold five units of power each.

105.9 – Damage control cannot be used to repair power absorbers during a scenario, but in between the scenarios of a campaign game, a number of PA panels equal to twice the damage control rating can be repaired.

Power absorber example: A given Andromedan Intruder has 8 PA boxes forward. On the first turn, 23 damage points (weapons fire) are scored on the forward three shield arcs. These 23 units are absorbed by the PA boxes. At basic levels these eight PA panels can hold 48 damage points/energy points, so there is no problem. At the end of the turn, one-fourth of the 23 units (6) is absorbed into the empty batteries and 16 points (two per panel) are dissipated. There is now one point left in one of the forward panels (it isn't really important which one). On the next turn, 74 damage points are scored on the front of the ship. If the PA panels were at basic levels, 48 would be absorbed and the other 26 points would be internal hits. However, the PA panels were charged to reinforced levels, and all 74 points were absorbed. With the one point previously absorbed, this total is now 75. One-fourth of this (19) could be absorbed into the batteries. However, the six batteries already hold 20 points (out of a maximum of 30) so only 10 points can be transferred. This leaves 65. Sixteen can be dissipated, leaving 49 in the eight forward panels at the end of the turn. If, on the next turn, the panels are only powered to "normal" levels (able to hold six per panel) one unit of damage would immediately be scored as an internal hit since the forward panels can only hold 48 at normal levels. However, we can assume that the Andromedan maintains reinforced levels. He also manages to drain his batteries for 11 points by doing things like operating his transporters (for no real purpose).

During a given impulse of the next turn, 24 damage points (3 photons) are scored on the forward arc. This increases the power held there to 73. On the next impulse 10 more points are scored (total now 83). Three of these points are scored as internal hits. One if them hits a power absorber (drone) and the Andromedan marks a forward PA panel. The 10 damage points held in it are released, but picked up by one of the rear panels. Then a Federation CA slips in behind at point blank range and delivers a full 70 damage points. These are applied to the five empty rear PA panels, which can only hold 50. Twenty points are scored internally, two of which get PA panels.

The situation becomes a "cascade" effect. The two destroyed panels release their 20 points of energy, 19 of which is picked up by the batteries. The other point, having nowhere to go, is scored internally, hitting another power absorber. The Andromedan player is at a disadvantage since each "Generation" of released power is scored as a volley and can score on the "one time" hits in column A. Luckily, this "generation" does not hit any PA panels and the "cascade" comes to an end. The ship has received 34 internal hits and 4 of the 14 PA panels are destroyed. At the end of the turn no energy can go to the batteries (the three surviving ones are full), but 20 points can be dissipated. The Andromedan ship is in a dangerous position, and if it has not destroyed its enemies, it will have a difficult time surviving.

106.4 – The 10 torpedoes carried include those originally loaded on fighters. Assuming all fighters return to re-arm, each will get to fire two torpedoes during the scenario.

109.5 – Hydran fusion beams are destroyed on "Torp" hits.

110.5 – Transporter bombs cannot be transported into a hex containing a ship, so there is no problem with power absorbers. If a ship with PA's runs into it, it explodes and the damage points are applied to the hull.

113.4 – Klingon Type I-S torpedoes may be equipped with "homing" warheads that home on warp power emissions. These are referred to as Type I-SH torpedoes.

113.41 – The Type I-SH torpedo is identical to the I-S except that, after it has locked on it does not need guidance.

113.42 – The Type I-SH will lock on to its target automatically when it has closed to a range of 4 hexes or less. If this range increases later, or if the target moves out of the I-SH's FA arc, it loses its "lock on." If the launching fighter still has lock on to the target, there is no effect. The drone keeps following the target. If the launching fighter has lost its lock on the I-SH is removed from play.

114.2 – The limitation on firing applies to

each time the stinger is launched. When recovered by the launching ship, the fusion beams may be reloaded in the same manner as drones, using special capacitor modules.

117.21 – Overloaded phasers may be "held" in the same manner as regular phasers may be held.

118.01 – All up-rated cruisers may have the cloaking device installed. Players should note that this will considerably change the complexion of the game, but may be challenging in a different way. The cost of operation is 30 units of power per turn for all CX types.

118.3 – Plasma torpedoes armed in a single turn cannot be held. Plasma torpedoes loaded in a single turn are Type "G". Torpedoes may, at the option of the owning player, be armed in the normal method.

118.7 – The KRX uses Romulan type plasma torpedoes if loading normally, and Type G if loading in a single turn. Torpedoes armed in a single turn cannot be held. Torpedoes may, at the option of the owning player, be armed in the normal method.

119.217 – Tugs are considered to be the same size as CA's. Pods are considered to be "smaller ships" if detached, and part of the tug if attached.

119.224 – Add the following systems to the chart:

3 Power Absorber
5 T/R Beam
6 Fusion Beam
15 Displacement Device

122.01 – Romulan War Hawk and Falcon ships carry one NSM. Carrying of mines by KR, KF5R, KRX, or Condor is at the option of the ship CO.

122.1 – The Condor can accelerate by 15.

123.1 – The plasma torpedo tubes on the Gorn Monitor Pod have swivel-mounts. The right mount could fire in directions 1, 2, or 3. The rear mount could fire in directions 3, 4, or 5. The left mount could fire in directions 5, 6, or 1. The scanner on the Starliner is added to that of the tug that is carrying it.

123.2 – The Gorn sub-light BB has damage control (as do all sub-light ships) for use between scenarios of campaign games. Turn mode is C.

127.4 – The satellite ships mentioned are the Cobra and Courier ships.

127.5 – The Andromedans use damage control between scenarios of a campaign game. They can repair a number of power absorbers equal to twice their damage control rating.

128.1 – Federation: Two "CS" should be "CX".

141.0 – The Gorns have, according to Star Fleet Intelligence, three Monitor Pods (one for each of their tugs). However, their war plans call for using only one of them since to use all three would tie up their tugs and deny them the vital fleet transport/supply support they require in their desolate area. The Andromedans may have sent a couple of dozen "intruders" toward our galaxy, but they have been arriving over a period of decades and it is rare for two to appear in the same year, let alone area. The Andromedans do not appear to be interested, at this point, in participating in the military campaigns of this Galaxy, but it could be assumed that they might do so as a means of conquest, if that is what they are trying to do. In such a situation, perhaps three to five Intruders could be added to the forces of any fleet.

Numerous apparent typos exist on heading of the Master Ship Chart. Figures in the victory point column given as "A/B" are not explained. The left number is used for game balance, and the right number for victory points. In other terms, the left number indicates combat power and the right number indicates how valuable it is to its owner. There are several errors in the BPV column.

Ship	Correct BPV
Tholian CX	70
Tholian DN	53
Tholian CA	32
Tholiam BW	20
Federation Cargo Pod	5
Gorn Cargo Pod	5
Federation Starliner	6/12
Orion CRX	55

Federation Starliner should be "+". The KRX has 16 boarding parties, not six.

Federation, Gorn, and Klingon tugs use 1 unit of energy per hex when carrying no pods. Unless specified otherwise, they have the same turn mode with no pods as they do with one.

The Orion Salvage Cruiser uses turn mode B.

SSD Sheets:

No. 3 Kzinti Frigate: Last number on damage control should be 0.

No. 4 Federation Tug: Shield 6 should have 20 boxes.

No. 5 Tholian PC: Scanner and sensor labels are reversed.

No. 6 Orion Pirate Cruiser and Salvage Cruiser: Sensor and scanner labels are reversed.

No. 9 Tholian CA and BW (CVL): Sensor and scanner labels are reversed.

This errata is current as of June 3, 1981.

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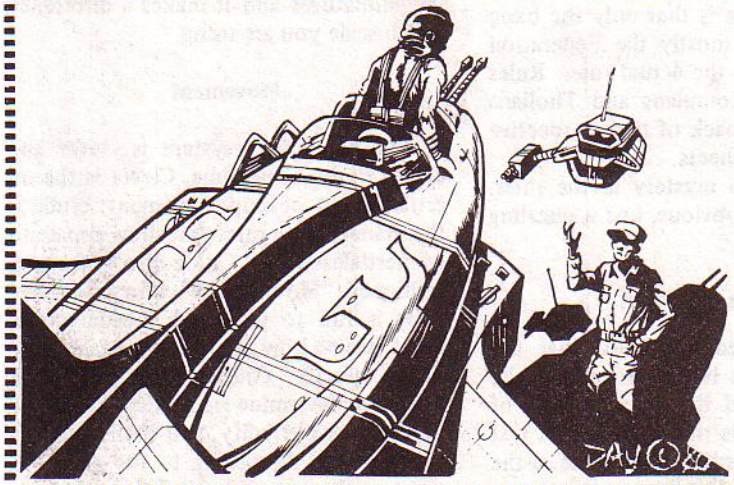

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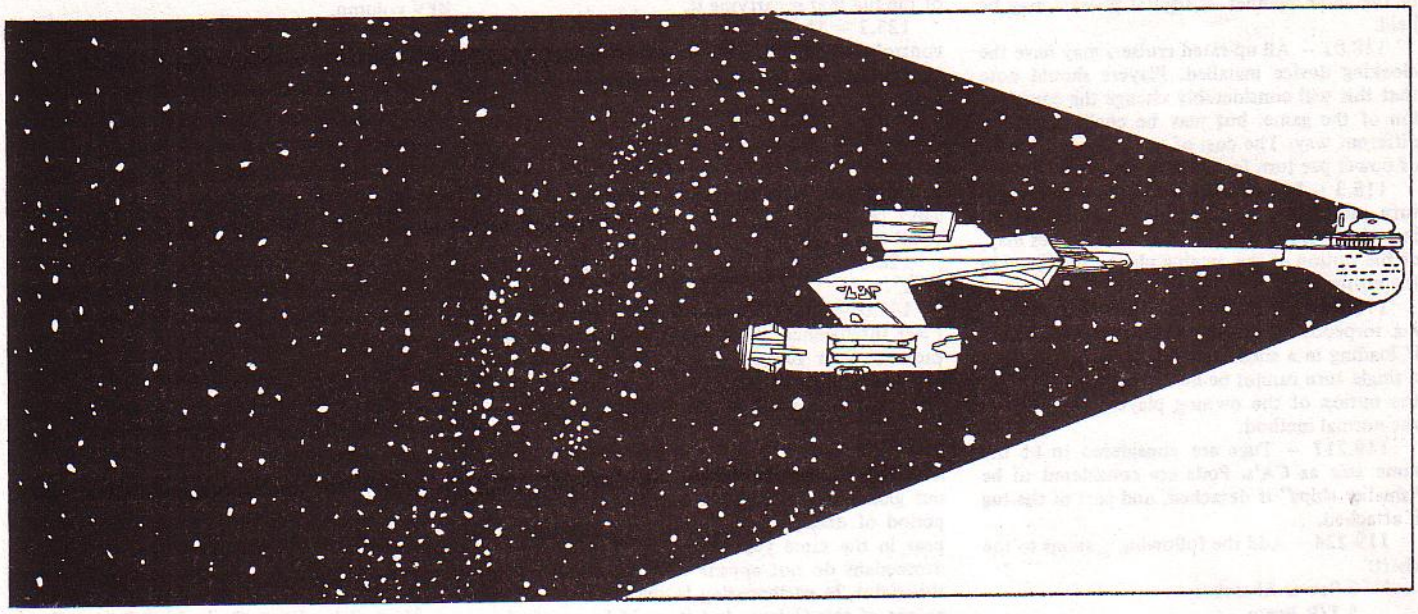

Star Fleet Battle Manual

by Denis Loubet

The STAR FLEET BATTLE MANUAL puts you in the captain's chair of one or more starships. You are pitted against ships controlled by other players. The play is fast and fairly simple; there are only six pages of actual rules in the manual.

This is a miniatures game, played without benefit of gameboard. Any vast, flat expanse will do, and movement is accomplished with the aid of rulers and compasses. What you get in the way of miniatures is a set of "Compass Cards," with overhead ship silhouettes and compass markings. These cards cover all main ship types from the Federation Dreadnought to the Romulan Warbird. There is also a line of official miniatures made for this game. Most are cast in plastic, but there are others cast in metal. These fit the compass cards and add a lot to the appearance of the game.

This game must have been considered quite good when it first surfaced in 1977. But, over the years, it has been overtaken as other companies built upon, and improved on, the original idea. The similarities between the manual and *Star Fleet Battles* are many and varied; the lineage of the Task Force game is obvious. But the differences are obvious, too, and I believe the later game to be the better one. It has to be; it's got two extra years of game development behind it. But taken by itself, the STAR FLEET BATTLE MANUAL is enjoyable and quite playable.

The Manual

The rules of the game are clear, even if some of the rationale is a bit strange. For instance, is warp drive inertial? If it is, the rules handle it with a simple, albeit time-consuming, inertial movement system. However, I seem to remember from the TV episodes that many times the *Enterprise* floated dead in space simply by cutting engine power.

One interesting aspect concerning the set-up of the rules is that only the basic rules, concerning mostly the Federation ships, are given in the actual rules. Rules concerning the Romulans and Tholians are given on the back of their respective energy allocation sheets.

There is also a mystery in the rules. Nothing big and obvious, just a puzzling omission . . .

What's the Scale?

It's never stated right out what the scale of this game is. If we look to the miniatures we find they have a scale of 1/3788. OK, but is that the scale of just the miniatures or is it also the scale of the game? More about this later.

The Miniatures

The plastic models of the Federation ships are perfect. Molded in exquisite detail with a satin-smooth finish, they show excellent workmanship. Flash is almost non-existent, and the parts fit together snugly. They're great.

I just wish I could say the same for the lead miniatures. I have only seen two of them, the Romulan Warbird and the Tholian cruiser. They are cast in lead, and, compared to the plastic ships, they're just junk. There's flash all over them; the detail is sloppy; they're simply crude.

Despite this, they're fun to play with. The game does not really require that miniatures be used, and therein lies an inconsistency. The silhouettes on the cards are in a slightly different scale than the miniatures and it makes a difference which scale you are using.

Movement

The movement system is clever and crude at the same time. Clever is the inertial aspect of ship movement; crude is the maneuvering rules that allow apparently inertialess turns. Crude also is the old-fashioned "Move/Shoot" turn sequence.

It is fun to play with inertial movement, seeing how fast you can reach maximum velocity. You add energy to movement to determine acceleration, add in your present velocity, and then do something funny. According to the game designers, there is "drag" in warp space;

10% of your speed is consumed by friction. Strange, huh? Anyway, you now have your speed figured. To turn is to trade forward momentum for a heading change. This sounds OK, until you realize you can stop dead in space from warp six just by turning around. There's no turn radius, you just spin.

Another problem: There is no ramming allowed, as there is assumed to be a vertical displacement. However . . .

The Combat System

If you try to shoot at someone and there is another ship in the way, you have a fifty/fifty chance of hitting that other ship. So much for vertical displacement.

I had some trouble with the combat system. With all the highly vaunted technology at the disposal of the United Federation of Planets, you would think that they would use some form of targeting computer to direct the awesome energies generated by their ships. But *no*! How do you aim the planet-destroying fury of a Federation Dreadnought? You guess. That's right, you guess. You look at your ship, look at the other ship, and guess the angle you have to fire at to hit it. The outcome of battles depends on the players' ability to guess angles. This takes the game out of the realm of "Kirk vs. Kang" and narrows it down to "Bob vs. Bill," and if Bill happens to be myopic . . . tough luck.

A ship at any distance greater than point blank is tough to hit. At a yard, it has a target profile of one or two degrees. The Tholians game out as mean fighters simply because their ships are tiny and hard to hit.

Consider also the scale this rule presumes. Since you are firing at the ship, the angular size of the profile reflects the actual distance, in scale. The game scale is the same as the miniature scale. Since ships at maximum speed travel only a few ship-lengths per turn, the time scale must be in nano- or pico-seconds.

And after you've gone through all this pain of guessing angles and stretching a string to determine if you've hit, you still have to roll an idiotic green and black twenty-sider to see if you ever locked on. If you didn't . . . fssst. Too bad.

Two other novelties to keep in mind are that phasers do one point of damage each and that photon torpedoes don't damage shields, they just knock them down.

Playability

Despite all these gripes I have to admit that SFBM can be fun to play. Once you obtain some of the aids a miniatures game requires, like string, rulers, and a twenty-sided die, you realize that you're in for some strange pleasures.

It's fun to sweat over those cursed angles, to fill out your energy allocation sheet, to roll that damn die. I found myself cheering my opponents when they hit me, got a thrill when I finally reached warp six . . . and I really liked those little plastic starships!

But I might have enjoyed it more if I had never played *Star Fleet Battles.* I'm spoiled. But the STAR FLEET BATTLE MANUAL is a worthy precursor to that game, and should not be ignored.

STAR FLEET BATTLE MANUAL (Gamescience Corp.); $6.00. Designed by Lou Zocchi and Michael Kurtick. 28-page rulebook, and game aids booklet (12 pages of rules, two pages of plasma torpedo template, eight energy allocation sheets, and eight heavy stock compass cards, etc.). Any number can play; playing time 1-3 hours. Published 1977.

MINIATURES are available in clear plastic, opaque plastic, blue or green glow-in-the-dark plastic, and lead. Prices range from $2.00 to $3.25. Available ships include the Romulan, Tholian and Klingon ships (metal only) and the Federation scout, cruiser, destroyer, dreadnought, and tug (plastic or metal).

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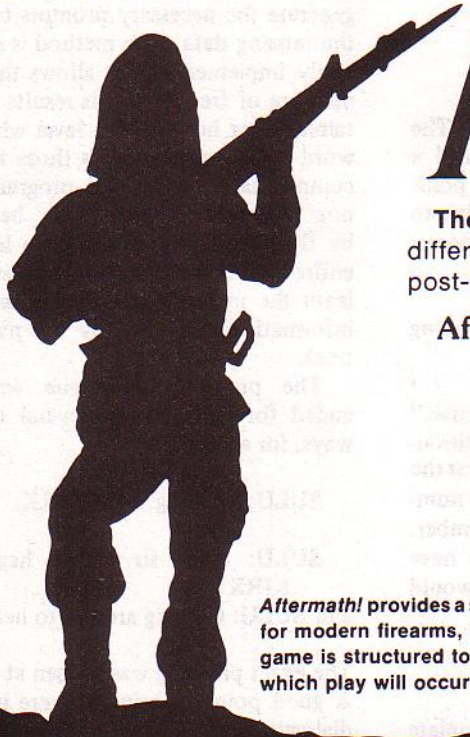

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A Universe in a Box

by Serg Korem

Several years ago I decided to write a *Star Trek* program. It was like any other *Star Trek* program of the time. It had a standard 8 x 8 sector within 8 x 8 quadrant display, shields, phasers, Klingons to shoot at, and the ever-reliable starbases at which to dock. The player entered numbers which corresponded to commands:

0 = set course
1 = fire forward phasers
2 = shields up, etc.

It was a good program as such programs go and it worked fine until one day it suddenly became BORING!! The mark of a good game, be it computer or board, is its ability to hold the player's attention in repeated play. Mine had failed the test.

Dialogue

My game wasn't dynamic enough. Each game was different, but there was no element of surprise involved. It was also a pain to use. THAT was the weak point. A game can be a masterpiece of ingenuity, but if you have to do table-lookups to enter a command or resolve conflicts, or worry about whether a rule applies in a certain situation, you've got a loser.

Then it hit me. Why couldn't I enter English language sentences as commands? If I could do that, why couldn't the program respond the same way? That was the key to my program. How to make it conversational yet simple enough to fit on a time-sharing DG ECLIPSE.

The final version of the program had a table which consisted of key-word commands such as:

COURSE
PHASERS
TORPEDOES
SCREEN
LONG (range sensors)
SHORT (range sensors)
COMPUTER
PROBE
and various others

The program would accept an English sentence in the form:

KIRK: (sentence)

where KIRK: was the user prompt. The input sentence was then parsed until a key-word was encountered at which point the program would enter a subroutine to extract additional information if necessary. For example:

KIRK: Set course, Mr. Sulu, heading 3.2.

would parse out the key-word "course." The program would then enter a subroutine which would attempt to parse out the key-word "heading" followed by a number and/or "warp" followed by a number. In this case the program wouldn't have found the key-word "warp" and would then generate:

SULU: Warp factor sir?
KIRK: Warp

and would wait for the user to complete the sentence with a number. This method would allow the user to enter:

KIRK: Set course 73.1 Mr. Sulu, warp factor 2.
or KIRK: Warp 2, at course 21.11.
or KIRK: Come to course 12.113, Mr. Sulu.
or KIRK: Won't you please come to course 34.02, Mr. Sulu.

or any other such variation as the initial command. Of course, this technique would also allow the following to be parsed:

KIRK: Of course 9 headings are better than 1 warped, 6 legged ostrich.

But the odds of a non-programming user realizing this without being told are slim, so the dialogue would rarely be this ludicrous.

This basically was the way I implemented command entry. I've already mentioned program prompting. If a command is entered without sufficient information imbedded within it to execute properly, the parsing procedure would generate the necessary prompts to obtain the missing data. This method is not only easily implemented but allows the user a measure of freedom. This results in maintaining user interest at a level which two word commands (such as those found in commercial "Adventure" programs) cannot achieve. The game can be played by the user without having to learn the entire game vocabulary. He need only learn the main key-words, the secondary information generated by the parse routines.

The prompting dialogue was hard-coded for each option several different ways, for example:

SULU: Heading, sir? / KIRK:

SULU: Aye, sir. What heading? / KIRK:
and SULU: Coming around to heading...

The exact phrasing was chosen at random. A good point to bring up here is that in dialogue-based games, your programmed participants should stay in character as

they would in real life. This adds to the believability of the game. In other words, a communications officer shouldn't have anything to do with navigation under normal circumstances.

Of course, a picture is worth a thousand words, so I still made use of sector/quadrant plots, and various other graphic printouts (that's what they actually were, since I was using a hard-copy terminal at the time). Once completed, I had a few friends playtest the game along with me. The results were unanimous! The game was much more playable and much more believable. However, it was still too predictable – all you ever did was zap Klingons – and stationary ones at that.

So, I expanded the responses of the game to certain situations. Instead of just tallying hits on displays I also generated dialogue such as:

SPOCK: Shields down. We cannot sustain another hit.

SPOCK: Hit on Klingon at sector 3.2. Sensors show he is at 23.12334% capacity.

or CHEKOV: Klingon at 7.5 destroyed, ser!

(That's the way Chekov talks).

At this point of the playtesting it was found that the displays were becoming superfluous unless you were docking or targeting torpedoes manually. This prompted the addition of a command to activate or turn off the main displays. The game could now virtually be played in a pure "dialogue" environment since even sensor readouts had been converted into English. But I still hadn't done away with the repetitiveness of the game!

Expansion

I sat through several reruns of the show to get some ideas. The first one to be incorporated into the game was one dealing with Romulans and cloaking devices. This was easy. I would randomly choose Romulans instead of Klingons, give them more power (to compensate for the drain caused by running the cloaking device) and cause them to "blink out" at certain points in the game.

Since the device consumed such an inordinate amount of ship's energy, the Romulans could not fire their weapons while the cloaking device was activated. The program logic allowed for this as well as moving the cloaked ships to new positions. This was not real-time, but it was better than the static game with the Klingons. The cloaking device prompted another innovation into the game. The "Romulan-pun-sequencing-flag." This was a three-state variable flag which would generate different dialogue under the same condition.

This is how it worked:

The flag was initialized to 2.

If a certain situation occurred (the deactivation of a cloaking device, say), the flag was tested.

If it were equal to 2 the program would generate:

SPOCK: Captain, *n* Romulans dropped their cloaking device.

MC.COY: I hope they didn't break.

SPOCK: Doctor, your penchant for puns is highly illogical.

If it were equal to 1 it would generate:

SPOCK: *n* Romulans dropped their cloaking device, Captain. And Doctor, if you say that you hope they don't break, I will personally feed you to a doomsday device.

MC.COY: You're becoming more human every day, Spock.

SPOCK: I sincerely hope not, Doctor.

If it were 0, the program would bypass this section. The flag would then be decremented.

This technique was used in several different ways in the program to generate dialogue between non-user characters. Not only did the user and program communicate, but the program "communicated" internally as well. This method produces unique dialogue within the game: dialogue which doesn't repeat. With enough such flag systems set up, a game could be played where very little dialogue repeated.

A modified version of this method was liberally sprinkled throughout the game as well. The variation involved generating a weighted random number and using it to generate a set of dialogue. A flag would then be cleared indicating that this situation's dialogue had been executed. This method was used mainly to communicate with the user and was rarely used between intra-program characters.

At this stage, the program was about 20K on the DG, and I had some 12K left in my work space. The remaining portions of the program were coded using the techniques described, or a variation thereof.

Tactical Scenario

All of the ST games around at the time were basic Klingon "shoot-em-ups" with very few variations. With literally a universe to work with I decided to make my program unique (it actually already was at this point). I added a "mercy mission" to the game. This involved delivering a shipment of desperately needed drugs to an uncharted planet (chosen at random by the computer).

The goal was actually harder than it sounds since the Romulans or Klingons were still present to attack the ship as it searched for the required planet. If the player was lucky enough to find it, the generated dialogue would prompt a display change. The display now resembled the displays of *Spacewar* except that instead of just having a sun, there was also a planet orbiting the sun. The object of the game was now to go into a stable orbit around the planet. Of course the Klingons or Romulans were waiting around a set radius from the sun – they were more sensitive to radiation than humans – and the user couldn't get within a smaller radius from the sun without burning up.

The program allowed the user to enter thrust vectors and burn durations in order to maneuver the ship into orbit. These variables would then be fed into equations of motion and gravitation to determine the new position and velocity of the ship. The core of this portion of the game not only had to generate and parse dialogue but had to process all of the gravitational interactions and navigational data as well.

Although command entry and program in this response were dialogue based, the player tended to rely more heavily on the displays for feedback. Therefore it was an easy matter to extract all of the command parsing into a separate subroutine. Also, the dialogue portion of this section was not as thoroughly developed as the others, since I wanted to keep the execution speed as close to real-time as possible. This resulted in a much more tension-filled section, which was a good contrast to the normal "shoot-em-up" portion of the program.

Probes

Around this point in time I added the concept of a "probe" to the game. Operationally, a sensor-probe was similar to long-range sensors. Programmatically, it was similar to photon torpedoes. That is, a sensor-probe, when launched from the ship, would travel in a straight line and would return sensor information to the captain. Unlike torpedoes, which travel a set distance and explode, the probe would travel until it was out of communications range (edge of the galaxy) or until it was discovered and destroyed by an enemy ship.

Logically, the probe returns its information to the ship's computer – which on the show had the capability of speech synthesis. This led me to add the ship's computer as a "non-user" character since it was a potential dialogue generating/accepting character. Not only could the user get probe information, but he could "use" the ship's computer for navigation, weapon control, etc.

Lessons

As you can see, the possibilities of this "universe" are endless. My program had many more concepts incorporated – both programmatic and game-wise. I haven't even mentioned speech synthesis/recognition or of tactics, strategy, etc. I have merely attempted to present to you, the reader, a set of ideas which, if implemented correctly, will produce a very "life-like" dialogue without the need for checking grammar or even syntax. More importantly, I want to stress the following points in regard to computer game design:

1. Keep it interesting!
2. Vary the pace!
3. Keep it logical and consistent!
4. Keep it user simple!

and 5. Use your imagination!

Hopefully, the ideas I've presented will prompt the reader to produce more enjoyable games. Game design is half (if not most) of the fun of gaming.

TSG BACK ISSUES

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No. 17. GEV designer's intro; strategy for Chitin: I; variants for Imperium, Melee, and a combination Ogre/Rivets variant; WarpWar fiction.

No. 18. IceWar designer's intro; variant scenarios for Invasion: America and War of the Ring; additional equipment for Traveller; mounted Melee; "Referee, Declare Thyself!" (role-playing GM technique).

No. 19. POND WAR; variant units and scenarios for GEV; combining Imperium and WarpWar; Battlefleet Mars variant; reviews of Swords & Sorcery, Runequest, and Raumkrieg; MicroGame design article.

No. 20. Olympica tactics; Psionics in Traveller; TARTARS & MARTYRS; Reality in Melee; designer's optional rules for Ice War; designer's article on Starships & Spacemen; "Rip-Off Blues" (wargaming frauds).

No. 21. Interview with Dave Arneson; running a MicroGame tournament; tactics for Ogre and GEV; spaceship miniatures; Black Hole variant rules, putting the Deryni into Melee; more reviews.

No. 22. Ice War tactics; Black Hole physics; PARTY BRAWL; 1978 SF/fantasy game survey results; Fantasy Trip short story.

No. 23. Invasion of the Air Eaters designer's article; Ogre meets Ice War; Sticks & Stones expansion; Vikings and Valde in The Fantasy Trip.

No. 24. Black Hole designer's intro; "The Psychology of Wargaming"; Naval Melee; "The Four-Howitzer Defense in Ogre;" variants for Chitin: I, The Creature that Ate Sheboygan, and John Carter of Mars.

No. 25. Stellar Conquest issue . . . designer's article, tournament tactics, and variant scenarios; also – strategy in Rivets; benefit-cost analysis for Ice War; "Everyday Life in The Fantasy Trip."

No. 26. Oneworld designer's intro; tactics in GEV; variations on Wizard; computers in wargaming; Life-sized Melee; and a variant that puts human forces into Rivets.

No. 27. Hot Spot's designer's intro; Time Travel; Nuke the Air Eaters (gaming atomic war); Weapons for Hobbits in TFT; Muskets in TFT; Game Design Part 1; 5 pages of game reviews.

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Deus Ex Machina

A FAREWELL TO RAMS

by Bruce Webster

It is with substantial regret that I write this, my last regular *Deus Ex Machina* column. It was two years ago this month (June), in San Diego, that I mailed my first column to *The Space Gamer*; ironically enough, I find myself writing this less than a week after my wife and I decided that it was time to make plans to leave this temporarily exposed portion of the continental shelf before the Caribbean reclaims it, and get back to South California. The last few years have brought many, many changes to computer gaming . . . but, unfortunately, I wrote all about *that* just a few issues back.

There are several reasons why I am giving up this column. Personal and professional commitments have soaked up a lot of my free time. My gaming activities have been given a lower priority, and so I'm not keeping up on the field very well. But the most compelling reason is that I have not had a personal computer in my home for the last several months, and I am finding it more and more difficult to come up with anything worthwhile for this column without a system to develop it on. I had originally hoped to replace my last system quickly, but my personal microeconomy is not cooperating, and it looks as though it will be several more months until I am happily losing sleep over a keyboard and CRT. Anyway, with all those factors hindering me, I decided that there are plenty of TSG readers out there who are more qualified to continue the column . . . and so I'm going to let you do just that.

Forrest and I have often talked on the various topics he'd like to see covered in this column, so let me spell out some of them now, and you can all get busy writing:

Character generation. I've seen many quick-and-dirty programs for generating characters for role-playing games (it's not terribly hard to roll 3 dice six times). Why not some more sophisticated programs for producing experienced characters? How would you simulate working a character through several months or years of game time?

Gamemaster aids. I never did write that column on "the computer as familiar," but I know that many of you must be using your computers to help moderate RPGs. How did you design your programs? What problems did you encounter? Do the players like or dislike having the computer there?

Converting board games to computers. I barely scratched the surface of this topic with my columns on hex algorithms. Just the problem of effectively representing all the information on a seemingly simple map in the computer could take up several columns. And what about keeping track of units, resolving combat, and checking legality of moves?

Multi-player / multi-computer games. This may get a little too technical for these pages, but basic concepts – such as playability – can certainly be hashed over here. I once started a column on two-player games based on over-the-phone communications (i.e., each one has his/her own computer with a modem) and began to see ways in which such a game, if not properly done, could end up being exceedingly dull.

Play-by-phone games. I've written a couple of columns on this, and I've done some significant software work along these lines. But it'll be a long time before I have anything more to say, so let's hear from those of you who are also interested.

Specific techniques for computer games. Lord British's article on *Akalabeth* and 3-D graphics is an excellent example.

Computer moderation of play-by-mail games. It seems that most of the PBM games around use a computer to aid in moderation; I, for one, would like to hear about some of the approaches, techniques, successes and failures connected with those games.

Since something like 25% of you own your own computer, surely many of you have done work along these lines and can say a few intelligent things about what you've done. As for whether or not to send in complete listings, it would be best to talk with Forrest and Steve first, since listings take up a *lot* of space.

I am not leaving these pages forever – I need to make at least enough to keep my subscription current – but I'll probably only write a few times a year. I feel that *The Space Gamer* is the best publication in the field, but I also feel that it suffers from having 90% of its articles written by a relatively small group of people. I'm hoping that this move will help enlarge that group and thus make TSG even better.

Finally, I would like to thank all of you who have written me over the last two years, offering encouragement, criticism, and commentary. I would like to keep hearing from you in the future, and promise to do better when it comes to answering your letters. After mid-September, I will be in San Diego and can be reached at the following address:

Bruce F. Webster
9264 Grossmont Blvd.
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See you around.

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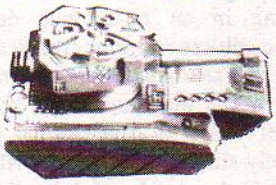

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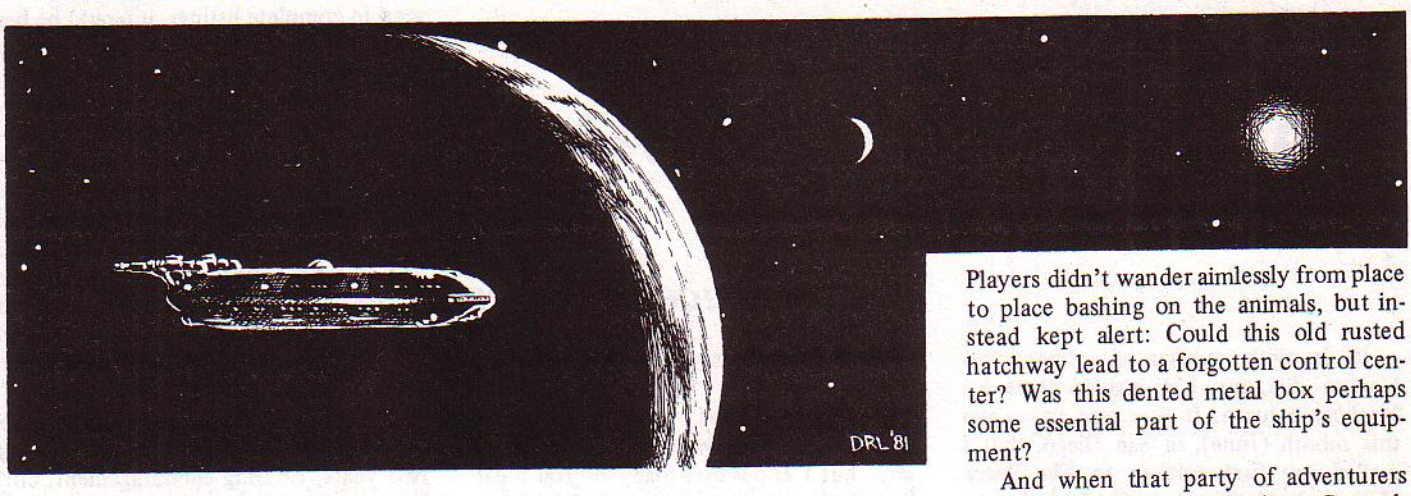


by W.G. Armintrout

Five or so years ago, I read a wonderfully vague advertisement in *Analog* magazine for some new game called *Metamorphosis Alpha.* It piqued my curiosity – though I hadn't the foggiest idea what a "role-playing" game was – and I mailed in my five dollars. I was certainly disappointed when it arrived in the mail, a flimsy booklet with god-awful artwork that looked scarcely worth a dollar. Where were the board and pieces? Nevertheless, determined to recoup something of my investment, I set about to play my first game.

Two years later, when I left college and closed down the campaign, I was a dedicated gamer. Those days of gamemastering in an on-campus dormitory were the wildest role-playing days I've yet seen. I also saw great changes. In the beginning I was the only one I knew who had ever heard of role-playing games. I frantically studied the poorly written rulebook to find out if I was doing things correctly. (What?! Players are supposed to travel in *groups*???) When I left I was only one of many, with *Dungeons and Dragons* going across the hall, *Empire of the Petal Throne* running downstairs, *Boot Hill* meeting biweekly in an ice cream shop, *Monsters! Monsters!* appearing sporadically, and as I went out the door with my suitcases I saw my first copy of *Traveller.*

If someday a raiding party of wolfoids puts me on the rack and demands my game-mastering secrets, these are the nuggets I would supply them with. I wish I could claim credit for all of them, but almost all of them come from prolific cross-fertilization. Thank you, old *Metamorphosis Alpha,* and gracias to my now-distant college buddies.

The Super Campaign

So what's *Metamorphosis Alpha*?

As far as I know, it was the first of the science fiction role-playing games, a creation of TSR. The idea was that some enormous starship, so huge that entire decks have been landscaped into looking like portions of Earth, ran into a weird radiation storm and got zapped. Most things promptly died, and the majority of the rest became mutated. Life goes on in a sort of medieval style and players go adventuring to discover lost relics such as surgical kits and disruptor rifles. Zap the bearoids!

It was a nice place to start. For one thing, the game was basically a wilderness adventure so "gilded hole" mentality was avoided. But the best part of all, although rather skimpily described in the rules, was what I call the Super Campaign. Each player had three goals – (1) survive, (2) grab lots of glory, and (3) save the starship.

Too bad the rules didn't tell the game master how to save the ship. I drew up a list of twenty or so items that needed doing. The easiest were simple exploration problems (find Engineering Section). Others were more like quests (obtain the long-lost Astrogator unit, last seen in cougaroid country). I threw in a few technological tasks too (spacewalk on the hull and repair the burned-out sensor housings). Each item was difficult, worthy of an entire campaign. To accomplish all twenty was a big, long-range objective (it had to be – if the ship was saved, the game was effectively over).

I found that the long-range goal – or Super Campaign, being composed of a series of campaigns – made a difference. Players didn't wander aimlessly from place to place bashing on the animals, but instead kept alert: Could this old rusted hatchway lead to a forgotten control center? Was this dented metal box perhaps some essential part of the ship's equipment?

And when that party of adventurers finally stumbled into Auxiliary Control, by virtue of their captured pass-keys, and saw on the viewscreens for the first time in their lives the stars all about them . . . well, they knew that they had accomplished something.

Nugget One – Any good gamemaster will provide an opportunity for something more than everyday one-or-two-session adventures. Come up with something lofty and difficult – but not overpowering.

The Vulnerable Man

If there was one thing I liked about *Metamorphosis Alpha* – well, I liked the IDEA, but actual practice was sometimes dislikable – it was the mutant creation rules.

Players could be humans, mutated humans, or mutated animals. The mutants rolled for their characteristics like humans. But they also rolled to see how many mutations they received. They could then pick which mutations they wanted off a large list.

But that's not the good part. Depending on how many mutations they received, each mutant had to receive one or two unfavorable mutations. These were assigned randomly, ranging from such things as epilepsy and leukemia to uncontrollable surplus arms and a lack of resistance to infection.

Most role-playing games concentrate on racking up super talents. That's nice, but what about the other side of the coin? Faults can be overcome, or come to grips with, and that can be entertainment too. I remember a very humble mutated cougar who could fight like nobody's business. Why was he humble? He had to be – he needed friends to look out for him when he had his epileptic fits every eighth combat or so.

However, things do need to be balanced. Lack of resistance to infection (which can come from any combat wound, save perhaps a self-cauterizing laser graze) seemed to be too big a handicap to characters that had it. They spent all their time looking up doctors and stocking up on antidotes and seldom had much fun.

Nugget Two – Don't be afraid to try out a few "loser" characteristics in a player character. Gambling, fear of heights, greed, obesity, drunkenness – for my own characters, I try to make every third one an unlikely candidate for success. Ever tried a giant thief?

The Omnipotent Brain

When I started out with *Metamorphosis Alpha,* I went strictly by the book. The book said that the Main Computer of the starship was still alive, hated mutants, was in full control of a fleet of security robots, and would help any humans that requested it.

Initially, adventures tended to go something like this: party of humans find a computer terminal, request an escort of security robots and directions to the nearest cafeteria, and live happily ever after. Alternatively: mutants find a computer terminal, are spotted by the computer, and get ambushed by a posse of security robots (usually fatal – ever taken on a party of robots when all you have is a primitive crossbow?).

Something had to be done.

Of course, you could hide a laser rifle under every bush and a grenade in every ruined hut and maybe the mutants could survive . . . but I never cared for supercharging a campaign.

My solution was to simply decree that the computer had lost its Locational Matrix, the part that told it where things were and how to get from hither to yon. (The Matrix was conveniently in the hands of ferocious mutated whales on the arctic deck). Security robots could not be told to ambush anyone they couldn't find. Computer terminals could not give coherent directions. However, the computer was still available as a game-mastering device: for instance, to ask humans to accomplish some of the tasks required by the Super Campaign.

Nugget Three – If anything is omnipotent – be it Grok, God of the Lizards to Grant Tonioli, Mafiosa kingpin – give it an Achilles heel. Maybe that evil King has a pretty daughter you can marry against his will?

Ups and Downs

"Damn the elevators!" I cried one day. Another party of adventurers had just reached the elevators and were demanding to see every deck on the starship. And I hadn't gotten around to mapping all eighteen of them quite yet . . .

In any science fiction adventure, elevators or things like elevators can give too much mobility to a party of adventurers. Magic portals can have the same effect in a fantasy game. The game master sighs in total exasperation: "I haven't got that mapped yet." Whereupon the players beat him with their rifle butts.

Here are three fairly decent "fixes" for this problem:

Ambushes. Being logical, you can make the assumption that any major means of transportation is going to attract powerful attentions the way a water hole attracts lions. Say, by Main Computer (a bevy of roaming security robots?) or maybe black market merchants and pirates. On the other hand, opening a door that opens on the Unknown can initiate something else. Door opens, and water gushes in from that flooded deck, or that long lingering radiation gives you a dandy dose, or bloodvines come snaking into the tiny room and the elevator doors won't close . . .

Weird Controls. An elevator is a box with controls marked "1st floor," "2nd floor," etc., right? Not in my universe! Perhaps this one has a robot attendant waiting to take your requests, only he is sadly injured and not too reliable. Maybe this machine reads thought waves, or coded responses from the right kind of pass key. My favorite is simply to redefine the controls so that buttons do not indicate specific floors, but rather whether you want to go up two floors (+2) or down seven floors (-7). Push the same button, and you'll go somewhere else all day long. Now add a few more buttons for confusion – say, for movement from station to station within a floor, a la *Star Trek's* elevator – and the players will stay a bit confused for some time.

Disguise. The rulebook said something about the elevators being towering cylinders in the center of each deck. Unfortunately, that stands out a little bit in the medieval wilderness and makes too handy of a reference feature. One gamemaster I knew camouflaged everything with holographic plates – you couldn't find an elevator unless you stumbled into it. I just decreed that the elevator was housed in a one-story building. How did it go from deck to deck? Blame it on super science – maybe it runs beneath the deck to the wall and then goes up or down. Maybe it materializes. A game master can't know everything.

Nugget Four – Always add something a little unusual to what would otherwise be usual. Elevators have weird controls. Maybe automobiles have tillers instead of steering wheels. What if guns have their grips at the firing end of the barrel?

Bye, Bye, Birdie!

When I was game-mastering, the most popular single class of characters was the mutated eagle – eagloid. Not that that means anything. I once ran a fantasy campaign by mail where the most popular character was a female goblin! But it is significant.

For the game master, flying characters can be a pain unless you are able to deal with it. After all, an eagle can map out an entire deck in no time at all. He can also fly away from danger rather often.

When looking for a solution, try to think logically: if this were a real world, what would place natural limitations on this too-powerful character?

First, a flying character cannot transport all that much loot. A few rings, a bag of gold coins, that antique chainsaw – but not that great hunk of machinery, not your wounded friends, and maybe not even yourself if you are seriously wounded. Fliers need to team with ground-based characters. (And, if the game master is lucky, maybe some of the other players will not take too kindly to a flier that takes off whenever the rest of them have to fight!)

Second, fliers have their own special dangers. Sure, they avoid a lot of ground encounters – so make up a table of aerial encounters! Fliers can always run into a pack of mating hawkoids, or unsuspectingly land in a tree armed with poison spikes, or draw the attention of evil lookouts at the hideout the adventurers are supposed to be sneaking up on. (Remember, if something is in the air it can not only see farther – IT CAN BE SEEN FARTHER ALSO.)

Nugget Five – Most everything has its natural limitations. Sure, let magic carpets and flying rings into your campaign – just as soon as you can put together that new Air Encounter Table!

Looking for a Few Good Zulus . . .

I was reading the other day about a rash of new wargames by several companies about a battle called Rorke's Drift. The battle took place when a few thousand enraged Zulus armed with spears took on a few dozen British armed with firearms. It was a close fight, I'm told.

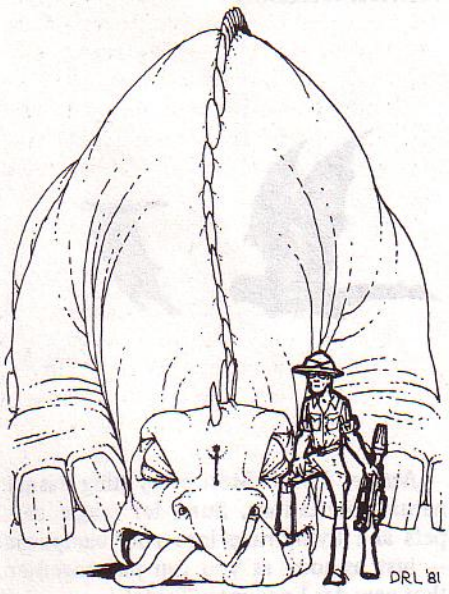
Shoot, that's nothing! Science fiction has got that all beat! If I recall my *Star Trek* facts correctly, a Captain Tracy once held off a large army of the Yangs with phaser fire.

So what happens when that party of adventurers in a basically medieval world stumbles on a disruptor rifle? Do they rule the world? Maybe not.

First of all, any game master worth his salt will limit the available ammo. Yes, you've got a bazooka, Ongka the Barbarian – now try to find shells for the darned thing! In *Metamorphosis Alpha,* most weapons ran off power packs. The best solution was to hide power packs well, or put them in the hands of people who knew how to use them (non-player characters).

Next, don't be afraid to raise the stakes. Any character that saunters into town openly carrying a disruptor rifle is going to have more than pickpockets and tax collectors to worry about – he is going to attract some high-powered attention. And when that character uses his laser pistol to kill a lionoid in the wilderness . . . well, perhaps a mountain tribe will be enraged by the sound of high-energy weapons in their turf.

Just a personal note here. A few years back, I had the opportunity to playtest Metagaming's experimental science fiction role-playing game. I didn't have too much fun. Repeater lasers, collapsium armor, atomic grenades – well, things can get a little TOO powerful. The fastest draw fires his Incredible Weapon at the enemies, and they sizzle into nothingness . . . For my tastes, one or two powerful weapons tucked into a more low-key background is just right.



Nugget Six – Big weapons, incredible artifacts, wish rings – they can all attract greedy and bothersome attention.

Ah, Dulcinea!

So on our characters go – defending orphans, protecting maidens and widows, befriending the helpless, serving the causes of truth and beauty, and re-establishing justice. Long live knight-errantry!

Just one problem.

You see, I had a roommate who had the soundtrack from *Man of La Mancha,* so I have been exposed to the legend of Don Quixote. I have heard all about the adventuring and the questing. But where are the Dulcineas – "half a prayer, half a song, thou hast always been with me though we have been oceans apart" – where are the romanticized women of chivalry?

I know that the thirteen-year-olds with acne will be snickering at me for the idea of adding "girls" to the campaign, but I assure you that I do not promote the profligate spreading of unadulterated mush on to the fantasy role-playing scene. If you want that, go play *Dallas.* But I do have a small point to make.

Actually, I have a brief story to tell. Once upon a time, when I was stocking up a ruined city for the campaign, I added one enchained princess. My notes had one simple line: "Adventurers will fall in love with her; no saving roll." (That may not be the best game-mastering technique, but at the moment that is non sequitur). It so happened that a lone adventurer found her, rescued her, and they soon were married.

But they did not live happily ever after. He and she went adventuring, ran into some nasty rogues, and she got her poor head sliced off by a rapier.

That incident launched one of the most incredible – and spontaneous – quests that I have ever seen. He determined that he could not live without her, and set out to find a way to restore her to life. He plunged into the depths of the wilderness, he sought out every wise wizard and hirsute but mysterious hag, he tried everything.

Eventually he succeeded. (Who was I, a mere game master, to stand in the way of True Love?)

The point is that romance can add that Certain Touch to an adventure. The only problem is that, to my knowledge, there is no role-playing game that provides any sort of a system for this sort of thing. Roll 3 dice against IQ, Steve Jackson? (Perhaps I expose my ignorance. If anyone has heard of such a system for romance, please write an article about it so we can all benefit from this knowledge!) [SPI's *John Carter of Mars.* – SJ]

Nugget Seven – Lay a little loving on 'em! You may find that romance will help flesh out your two-dimensional characters and deepen your link to your alter ego. "I have sought thee, sung thee, dreamed thee, Dulcinea!"

The Monster-of-the-Month Club

Last week a game master I know dropped by my place to borrow *Arduin Grimoire* and *Monsters! Monsters!.* Why? Well, he doesn't think *The Fantasy Trip* has a good enough selection of monsters.

In fact, monster cataloguing is becoming quite an industry.

One of the finer points of *Metamorphosis Alpha* was that it contained rules for generating your own monsters – say, if you want to scrounge up a Desert Deck or an Arctic Deck. When I was game-mastering, we made this a community project – all of the players who wanted to got together and used the tables to generate the mutant lifeforms. The rules were not always realistic – how about giant teleporting penguins? – but the players would live with them and stomach the implausibility when they had had a hand in creating them.

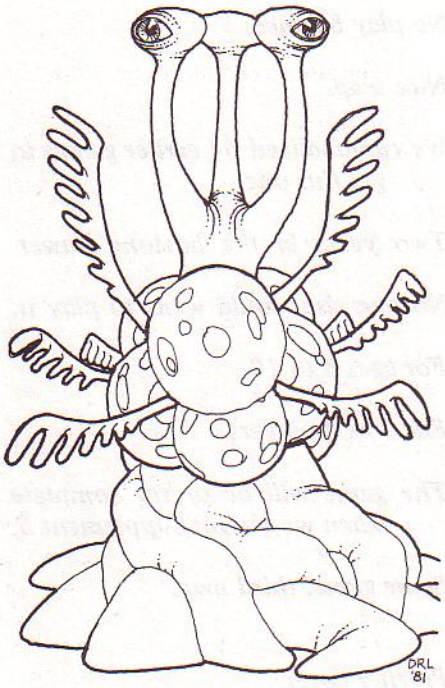
There is no real reason why every role-playing game shouldn't dedicate at least a paragraph or two to creating special monsters. It would come in handy.

One of the handicaps a lot of game masters have is a mistaken belief that new monsters must be built about some gimmick – acid breath, polymorph, or a tendency to melt when splashed by enchanted water. The result is often some silly, "cutesy-cutesy" aberration.

A new monster needs no gimmick. It does need to have a basic personality type, and it should look like something. You can steal ideas freely from half a hundred books – I picked up useful concepts on gnomes, banshees, brownies, Harriers, ghosts, demons, religious hermits, witches, and griffons from *The Fellowship of the Talisman* by Clifford D. Simak. Not that the book is one that I would urge you all to rush out and read – it was all right, but not spectacular – but it makes good source material.

My favorite resource is a local hobby shop in my nearest city. Any shop with a decent assortment of metal figures will send your imagination soaring! (On the other hand, it can be a horrible pain to try to find a figure for a monster you designed without seeing what figures were available – I have found nothing that approximates my favorite fantasy race, the Thellonicans, who look like giant erect otters).

Monsters have always been, at heart, a collection of appearance and personality. Twenty monsters can all have the exact same characteristics as an ogre, as long as the players believe in the differences in looks and mannerisms. Rather than coming up with a hundred-and-one monsters-with-a-gimmick, just flesh out a few regular monsters with real backgrounds. What do they want? What do they eat? Do they growl, snarl, mumble, snort?



Nugget Eight – When creating a monster, the object is to make the players believe in him. Letting them help out, using a painted metal figure, painting a capable word-picture as you game master – all of these are techniques that help.

A Help-Meet

I have heard some discussion on multiple game-mastering – that is, games that are run by two or more game masters. In some cases, one game master might run the monsters while the other game master moderates. Or perhaps each game master runs a different hunk of a world – say, one runs the land of the Saracens, another the Roman Empire, another the land of the Egyptians.

Well, it so happened that one semester when I was game-mastering *Metamorphosis Alpha* I was rooming with my best friend. He was into role-playing from being in my campaign the year before, but for this semester he was loaded down with heavy courses and couldn't afford to run a character on a weekly basis.

So he became my assistant game master – which gave him a lot of satisfaction, being promoted from serf to lord, so to speak, while it provided me with someone to try out my ideas on. Since he was too busy to game steadily, he took over the running of ten major non-player-characters scattered along the path of the adventurers.

He was the FIRST MATE, the neurotic last survivor of the original crew, and had a magnificent shoot-out with an inquisitive party of looting players. He bluffed them with his firepower (something that would never have occurred to me, since I usually ran the NPCs in the most obvious manner) and the players ran away.

He was TARLEENA, LADY OF THE FOREST, loaded down with a magical ability to sometimes make magic wishes. Eventually every player in the campaign stumbled into her hut, generally several at once, and tried to make bargains with her to pay for a wish. The players bargained more energetically with my roommate, who came into the game specially for the occasion, than they would have with me. Even though I may be terrific as a game master, players can still get tired of dealing with the same game master all the time. My roommate was a nice break.

He was also the DARK LORD OF THE RINGS, in search for the lost Captains' Rings which would unlock any door in the ship. When the first player made use of the funny ring he had found, I alerted my partner and the DARK LORD awoke! He made plans for his forces – a horde of mutant men armed with blaster muskets and a few flying lizardmen – and directed their operations. I moderated both for the players and for their nemesis the DARK LORD. The result was a fairer contest – each opponent working on the information he knew, and no more – and it saved me from going schizophrenic trying to both moderate and operate the enemies at large.

Nugget Nine – Don't be afraid to share the responsibility around. Game-mastering is fun, but it can be a real load sometimes unless you let a friend (or a girlfriend or a wife) do some of the thinking for you. Guests who come in just to play a special NPC can be a change of pace for your players, too.

Well, that is the sum and total of my recollected wisdom from my *Metamorphosis Alpha* days. However, one statement – these notes have been laced with my delight for *Metamorphosis Alpha.* That delight is not untempered. The game originally came out in the Dark Ages of role-playing and is not up-to-date. The combat system is hopelessly vague, for instance. For another, there is almost a total lack of direction on how to actually start out your own starship – you are essentially up to your own there. As a game master in those pioneering days, I invented new systems or grafted rules from other games into a hodge-podge that I used to moderate with. I cannot recommend that anyone rush out to buy the game today. Even TSR recognizes this fact – although they still sell *Metamorphosis Alpha* according to my latest catalogues, they also sell an improved game – *Gamma World*. However, I have never seen that one so I can't comment on it.

If I have said anything that you want to add to or cast abuse upon, please write a letter to the editor. Or, if you prefer, write to me:

W. G. Armintrout
8N 2W
Tooele, Utah 84074

If you write to me, that gives me the opportunity to comment on your letter before I pass it on to *The Space Gamer.* Otherwise, I won't see your comments on my material until it's in print and any reply I might have couldn't be printed for several more issues – by which time the original letter would have been forgotten.

If you don't want any comments from me, then go directly to the editor.

Glossary

A short guide to the commonest words and phrases found in game advertising blurbs . . . and what they may REALLY mean!

Term	Definition
Designed for use with any fantasy role-playing game.	*Designed for D&D.*
The Game Master will determine . . .	*Sorry, we couldn't think up a rule for this.*
. . . in any reasonable manner.	*We couldn't think up a rule for that, either.*
Optional Rule	*We didn't have time to playtest this one.*
Notes	*This is the quickest way we could think of to fill a blank page.*
Not a licensed D&D product.	*We couldn't afford the license.*
Mega-Trek '81.	*They'd never license us anyway.*
The Ultimate fantasy game.	*Ultimate number 17, that is.*
A new direction in wargaming!	*We're lost.*
Accurate simulation.	*Dull game.*
Fast-moving!	*Trivial.*
Challenging!	*Figuring out the rules is the real challenge.*
Exciting!	*No play balance.*
Fascinating!	*Nice map.*
Original!	*We cannibalized 64 earlier games to get this one.*
Two years in the making!	*Two years in the bottom drawer.*
Suitable for beginners.	*No one else would want to play it.*
For ages 8 and up.	*For ages 8 to 10.*
For 2 to 4 players.	*For 2* or *4 players.*
BananaQuest Supplement 4.	*The game will be pretty complete when we get out Supplement 5.*
Third game of the BananaQuest series.	*Same game, third map.*
2nd Edition.	*Prettier cover.*

Revised Edition.	*Includes errata.*
Boxed Edition.	*Same game, $5 more expensive.*
Collector's Edition.	*Same game, $10 more expensive.*
(No designer listed.)	*No one wanted the blame.*
In a handy Ziplock bag.	*The printers screwed up 20,000 boxes.*
Two complete games in one package.	*Neither was worth publishing separately.*
Now accepting orders.	*You get our game two days early; we get your money two months early.*
Monthly.	*Bimonthly.*
Bimonthly.	*Quarterly.*
Quarterly.	*Maybe next year.*
Nominated for best game of the year.	*We stuffed the ballot box.*
Two award nominations.	*Didn't win either one.*
Winner of the Charles Roberts Award.	*The competition was even worse.*

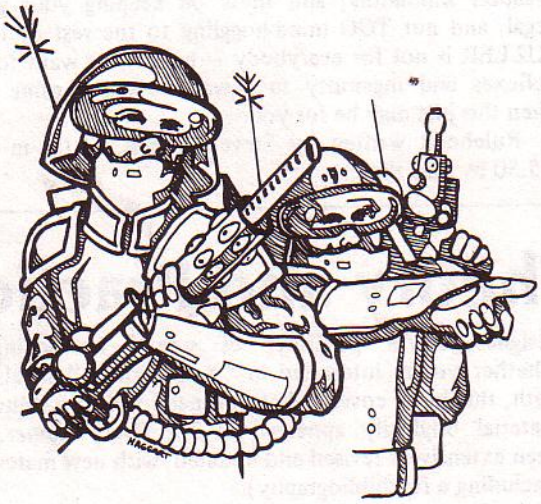
Contest

This month's contest: Send us your own definitions like those on this page. Each entry may include as many definitions as you can come up with; judging will be on the basis of overall quality, humor, and aptness.

All entries will become the property of TSG. First place will win a 12-issue subscription; second place will will win a 6-issue subscription. Any especially good runners-up will also be printed. We reserve the right to award fewer prizes if no entries of publishable quality are received. Entries must be postmarked no later than August 31, 1981.

STAR CLUSTER ONE

designed by Steve Jackson



Once long ago . . .
man had amassed enough power to reach out among the stars and carve out a vast new empire. Today, the empire is gone, but you now have the power!

Star Cluster One is a multi-player play-by-mail game of exploration, diplomacy, and combat. Starting from a single world, each player must explore the suns of the Cluster for habitable worlds. If he's lucky, he may even find one of the devices of the fabled Outsiders! Players intrigue, negotiate, and attempt to build their empires.

To enter, send $15 for the rules booklet, set-up fee and three pre-paid turns or mail $2 for the rules booklet alone to:

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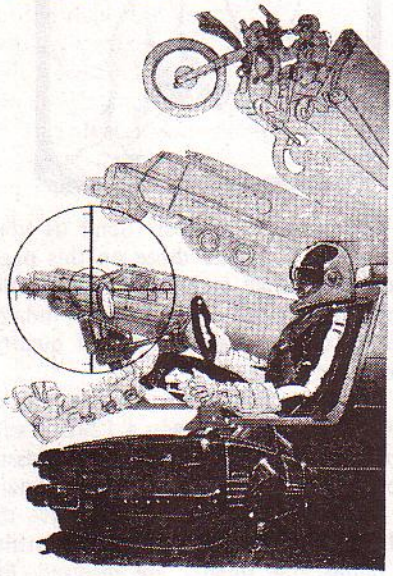
CAR WARS

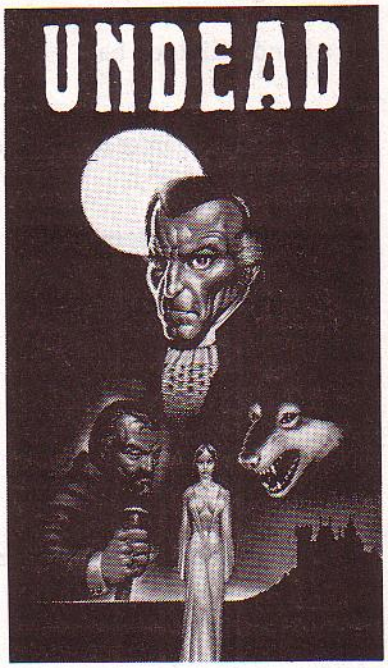


Ever want to blow away the car that cut you off from the freeway . . . drop a few spikes to discourage a tailgater . . . take on a cycle gang with the twin .50-cals under your hood? Now you can.

In CAR WARS, players design freeway combat vehicles, with weapons, armor, and even body style. Then they take them out on the roads of the future – to come home 'aces,' or crash and burn.

Designed by Chad Irby and Steve Jackson. Includes 24-page rulebook, road grids, and FULL-COLOR counters (drawn by Loubet) for cars, cycles, wreckage, etc. Any number can play. $3.00 in stores, or $3.50 by mail from SJ Games.

UNDEAD



UNDEAD! A role-playing game inspired by Bram Stoker's classic *Dracula.* The vampire Count has come to London to spread death and terror. Moving on a map of the city, the vampire player tries to conceal his coffins and find new victims. His heroic pursuers search for his hiding places and try to alert the city. When the players meet, they battle – until the vampire flees, or one side is destroyed. For two or more players, with or without a referee. Designed by Steve Jackson. Components include *full-color* counters and city map; 24-page rulebook, and combat maps. $3.00 in your hobby shop, or $3.50 by mail direct.

KILLER

The controversial game that's being played across the country! KILLER is a "live" game. Each player tries to knock off one (or all) of the others, by fair means or foul. Usually foul. Waterguns or dart-guns replace pistols; an exploding balloon becomes a bomb, and so on. This is the first published set of rules for doing your friends in . . . without hurting them. Includes scenario suggestions; dozens of weapon simulators; and hints on keeping your game safe, legal, and not TOO mind-boggling to the rest of the world! KILLER is not for everybody – but if you want to test your reflexes and ingenuity in a way no paper game ever will, then this just may be for you.

Rulebook written by Steve Jackson. $5.00 in stores, or $5.50 by mail direct.

GAME DESIGN: Theory and Practice

Everything you ever wanted to ask about game design (but didn't know where to start). This authoritative book covers the field from both the theoretical/mathematical viewpoint and the practical angle. The general theory and history of wargaming lead into a detailed nuts-and-bolts discussion of combat, terrain, mapping and movement, component design, professional playtesting techniques, and more. A special chapter covers role-playing game design.

GAME DESIGN is co-authored by two authorities in the field. Nick Schuessler is publisher of the iconoclastic *Journal of WWII Wargaming* and has taught a University of Texas-sponsored course in wargame design. Steve Jackson is designer and/or publisher of several best-selling games. Whether you're interested in "simulation," "playability," or both, this book covers what you need to know. Much of this material originally appeared in *The Space Gamer*, but has been extensively revised and updated, with new material added (including a full bibliography).

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Combined Arms in D&D

by Lewis Pulsipher

A novice DM, especially one who has not had much experience as a player, tends to place monsters in his place of adventure in homogeneous groups – all orcs, or all minotaurs, or all trolls. *Dungeons and Dragons* DMs used to extend this homogeneity even to human groups, using all fighters, or all thieves or (shudder) all magic-users. On the other hand, the human adventurers' "combined arms" party includes units which are suited to melee (fighters), units using offensive magic (magic-users), defensive magic-using units (clerics), and stealthy units (thieves).

DMs soon discover that the adventurers, with the advantages of complementary abilities in their group, have great advantages over the one-dimensional monster groups. Some DMs solve this problem by giving special abilities to individuals within a homogeneous group. Thus a group of orcs might include standard magic-users, clerics, and thieves, and even high-level fighters, instead of normal orcs. I think this method is undesirable because encounters become completely unpredictable. When any creature can have almost any power, when even lowly orcs can cast fireballs, how can players make rational decisions about tactics and strategy? Moreover, if many species are capable of duplicating the abilities of humans, why do humans dominate the world? For example, almost everyone would agree that orcs breed rapidly; if they are otherwise equal to humans, won't the world be inhabited by more orcs than humans? How will humans survive? This is the evolutionary stumbling block of the "any monster can do anything" method.

I prefer the other obvious solution: let the monsters take advantage of "combined arms" cooperation just as the adventurers do. Different types of monsters are suited to different kinds of action, just as magic-using humans are suited to different actions than fighting humans. Why wouldn't the more intelligent monsters who have survived encounters with combined arms parties attempt to form such groups of their own? Take an ogre mage, for example, in *Dungeons and Dragons*. He has some magical powers and is a good, but not great, fighter. He might try to recruit a few orcs to do menial tasks, guard the rear, and absorb the brunt of enemy attacks. A few trolls could be the main melee force, with a few bugbears or hell hounds, or even a human thief, for stealth. But one limited magic-user isn't much; he could recruit more ogre magi, or he might try to attract some other magic-user such as an imp or su-monster. With this group he can present a formidable challenge to adventurers, and his force will be too strong to be resisted by typical homogenous groups living in his area.

Evil humans are not confined to recruiting other humans, of course, nor are monsters unable to recruit humans if the situation (and price) is right. However, there should be some rationale for the creation of a non-homogeneous group, and creatures of incompatible alignment are unlikely to be in the same group.

Don't go overboard with such parties. Non-human monsters as a group are deficient in spell-casting abilities in most FRP games (thank heavens). In fact, one can say that it is human magic-using capability which enables the race to survive in such hostile worlds. If your monster parties are all as well balanced in the different abilities, and as numerous as the adventurers, the characters will lose the battle all too often. A good DM recognizes that FRP is not truly realistic because the game is deliberately weighted in favor of the adventurers, that is, the players. Working under the burden of ignorance about their surroundings, and all the disadvantages of attack as opposed to defense, the adventurers would frequently bite the dust in a "realistic" setting. But this doesn't mean they should have an easy time of it. Letting monsters combine effectively is a realistic way to challenge your players.

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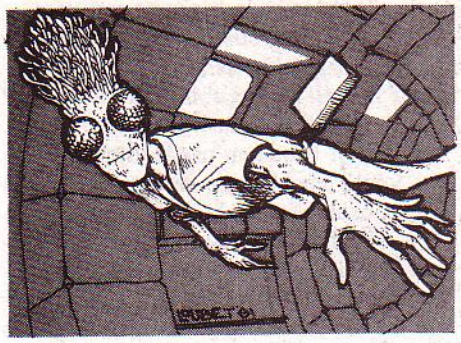
Nonhuman Races

The Medsai



An intelligent major race from the planet Gorgon, situated 200 parsecs spinward of the core.

Derived from omnivore/hunter stock, Medsai are upright humanoids standing 2.2 m tall from toes to noses/ears and massing 60k.

Physical appearance is startling, the main difference between Medsai and Humaniti being the Medsai head, which is a long oval topped off with many worm-like organs which serve as ears and noses. Medsai eyes are bulbous and faceted like those of the ancient terran fly, giving excellent peripheral vision but causing great discomfort in bright light. The mouth, located approximately 50mm from the eyes, is a slit-like skin flap covering the sharp bony ridges which serve as teeth.

The sense organs on the head are of two kinds: short and stubby (the noses) and long thin tendrils in which tiny audio sensors are located. Because of these many organs, both senses are greatly enhanced and confer a DM of +1 in surprise situations. Also note that sonic attacks will have more effect.

Medsai have an above average (Humaniti) dexterity due to their five fingers and two opposing thumbs. Because of this unusual arrangement, Medsai gain a penalty DM of -2 when using weapons made for four fingers and a thumb; the reverse of this applies to Humaniti.

A Medsai is generally weaker than the average "Hume" due to thin bone structure and smaller musculature (result of low-G homeworld).

Despite high intelligence, dexterity and technology, Medsai display a lack of aptitude in certain technical skills; to reflect this the following skills are treated as two levels lower: Computer, Gravitics, Electronics, Engineering, and Mechanical. Example: A Medsai with computer -3 would for game purposes have comp -1. Any skill levels at a minus are used so that a no-experience DM is avoided. Example: A Medsai is trying to repair battle damage to his airlock, repair throw of 9+, his mechanic skill is 1. He will need to throw 10+ to succeed.

The Medsai player character:
Strength 2-2
Dexterity 2+1
Endurance 2-2
Intelligence 2+1
Education 2
Social 2

No characteristic may be less than 1 initially.

Medsai Navy: use *High Guard*. Characters may enter the subsector navy only; no college of any sort is available. On the unit assignment table substitute patrol for training. (Medsai philosophy: "There is no place better to learn than in the field.")

Mercenary characters: the regular army is not used, and no decorations are available (same for navy) and substitute garrison for training on the assignment table.

Scouts, Merchants: as normal.

All character types may use this table when a skill is gained:

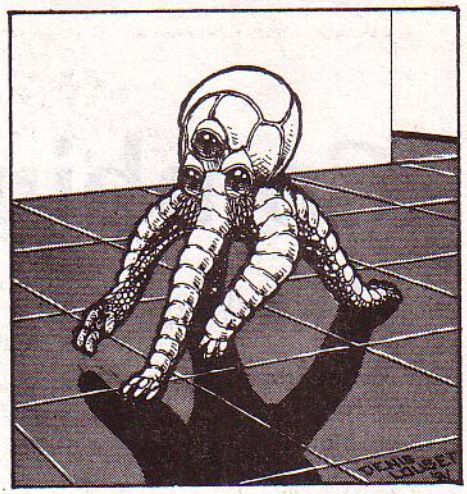
1 Survival
2 +1 Dexterity
3 +½ Endurance
4 +½ Strength
5 +1 Tactics
6 Weapon Combat

Weapon combat may be taken as blade, gun, or brawling. ½ characteristics are rounded down after mustering out.

The Medsai home world is A468A50-F.

– T. D. Graver

The Cult



"Cult" is the name Humaniti gives to this strange species. Each Cult has a sophisticated miniature communicator implanted in its brain shortly after birth. Thus, the entire species is linked by a mechanical-telepathic mass mind.

Physical description: The Cult superficially resemble octopi. They have five strong tentacles and a central head/body, all enclosed in a segmented exoskeleton. They are not aquatic creatures; in fact, they evolved in desert. Cult walk on three tentacles at a time, leaving two free for manipulation.

The thick shell is usually gray; the skin is red or purple and sand-textured. The "face," a bare area on the central body, has three eyes, two patches of sensory bristles, and a slimy white recessed tentacle used for eating. A fourth eye is located on the rear of the head.

Traveller characteristics of a Cult would be rolled as follows:

Strength: 3+1
Dexterity: 2-2
Endurance: 2
Intelligence: varies (see below)
Education: varies (see below)
Social: (not applicable)

Behavior of the Cult can be extremely bizarre. Invading Cult armies have been known to withdraw, even when winning a battle, or press on suicidally. Trade missions sometimes dump valuable goods on the starport loading field and leave without payment. These aberrations are thought to be due to malfunctions in the computers and communicators that link the Cult.

The Cult have no known homeworld; they have several scattered colonies in the Penzann cluster, trailward of Humaniti-traveled space. No formal relations exist between their race and any non-Cult creatures; they sometimes raid alien colonies, and sometimes trade peacefully.

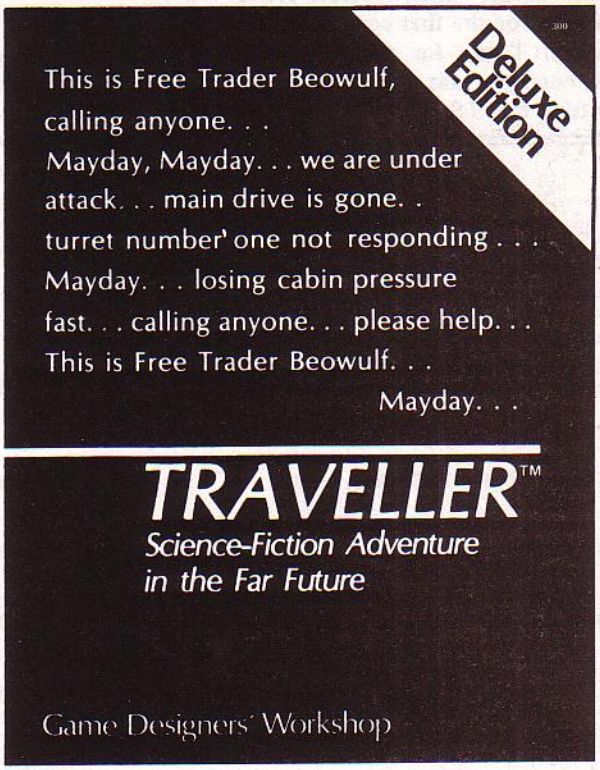
When the Cult mass mind works, it functions with great accuracy. Each Cult potentially has the knowledge of the whole race. What one Cult sees or does can be known to the rest of the race instantly.

The effective intelligence and ability of a Cult varies with the importance of its business. The mass-mind cannot "be" everywhere at once; a small Cult colony may have an effective intelligence lower than human, while the same individuals, as part of a vital trade mission, would function at above-genius level, with any abilities they might need.

However, they have very little understanding of the social functions of any alien races, and cannot dissemble well.

– Stefan Jones

Deluxe Traveller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This is Free Trader Beowulf,
calling anyone. . .
Mayday, Mayday. . . we are under
attack. . . main drive is gone. .
turret number one not responding . . .
Mayday. . . losing cabin pressure
fast. . . calling anyone. . . please help. . .
This is Free Trader Beowulf. . .
Mayday. . .
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G.E.V. Contest

This contest was originally run in TSG 38. Due to a typographical error, it was reannounced in issue 39. Readers could submit answers to either version.

Because of the mails, separate prizes were offered for the first correct answer from within Texas, for the first from the U.S. outside Texas, and for the first from outside the U.S. In fact, no correct answers were submitted either from within Texas or from outside the United States.

Readers were given a set-up and told to engineer a Paneuropean win, given that they would have the *worst possible* die rolls, and the enemy Combine would have the best possible.

This was my solution:

UNIT	MOVEMENT Move	Overruns	FIRE Target	Odds	2ND MOVEMENT Move	Overruns
HVY	0614, 0714, 0814	–	LT tank	5-1		
1 INF(1117)	1116, 1115	–	LT tank	5-1		
1 INF(0711)	0812, 0813	1 INF(0813)/6-1	–	–		
1 INF(0911)	1012, 1112	–	Mk. III secondary	5-1		
3 INF	0812, 0813	1 INF(0813)/6-1	–	–		
GEV(0512)	0613, 0713, 0813, 0913	–	MSL tank	5-1	0912, 1012, 1112, 1212	zap AP, then ram
GEV(1016)	1116, 1216, 1215, 1214	–	LT tank	5-1	1113, 1112, 1212	zap AP, then ram
GEV(0709)	0809, 0909, 1009, 1110	–	Mk. III secondary	5-1	1111, 1112, 1212	zap AP, then ram
Ogre	0613, 0713, 0813		Mk. III secondary (2 missiles)	5-1		
			2 INF (2 missiles)	3-1		
			HVY (5 secondaries)	5-1		
			MSL (2 mains)	5-1		
			1 INF(0712) (6 APs)	3-1		
			1 INF(0914) (6 APs)	3-1		
			LT tank (1 secondary)	5-1		

There were three winners:
M.T. Moore
Ft. Bragg, NC

Ross Lefstin
Encino, CA

James H. Kelley
Winslow, AR

Mr. Moore submitted the first solution to the typo version. Mr. Lefstin submitted the first solution to the original version; his solution was 3 points better than mine! (Instead of killing all the Combine armor, he just D'ed the LT tank. This saved enough factors to kill the last Combine 1 INF and to eliminate the need for moving a Paneuropean 1 INF next to the Combine Ogre. This saved the lives of that Paneuropean 1 INF and the Paneuropean 1 INF which I allowed the Combine 1 INF to kill. Total change from my solution -3 (LT tank), +2 (Combine 1 INF), +4 (2 Paneuropean 1 INFs) = +3.)

Mr. Kelley submitted the second solution to the typo version, but he deserves a prize since his trick, which applies to either version, was the best of all. (I had concluded that there was no way to kill both of the Combine infantry stacked with the Ogre (hex 1212) in the fire phase, since 15 or 16 factors on the secondary battery spills over onto the doubled 2 INF as 1-1 or 2-1 = no effect, and 12 factors on the infantry (2 missiles) is 3-1 = D, killing one of them. But Mr. Kelley fired on the 2 INF *first* at 3-1, killing one of them; then when 15 factors on the secondary battery spilled over as 7 factors on the infantry, it was 7-2, not 7-4, killing the last infantry. This saves the life of one GEV in the overrun, making this solution 6 points better than mine. (If one combines this with Mr. Lefstin's solution, one can get a solution 9 points better than mine.)

A fourth reader deserves an honorable mention; he is Joe Zaepfel of Tuscon, Arizona. Mr. Zaepfel, writing before the correction, was the only reader to deduce what the typo had been. He went on to duplicate my solution, except that he forgot to have the GEVs, just before their kamikaze ram, shoot off an Ogre AP gun to pick up a point. This meant his solution was one point worse than mine, and it therefore produced a draw, not a Paneuropean win.

Other honorable mentions (had all the right ideas, but solution spoiled by a vital detail) were Barry Eynon, Palo Alto, CA, and Todd Flynn, Oakland, CA.

The most common error of entrants was forgetting that the defense factor of infantry is doubled in woods. Therefore it takes 6 factors, not 3, to be sure of killing a 1 INF in the woods, and 12 factors for a sure D result on a 2 INF in the woods.

The next most common error was low-odds attacking. Since the contest specified that your die rolls were the worst possible, it takes 5-1 or better for an X, and 3-1 or better for a D; anything lower is a miss.

Other errors were:

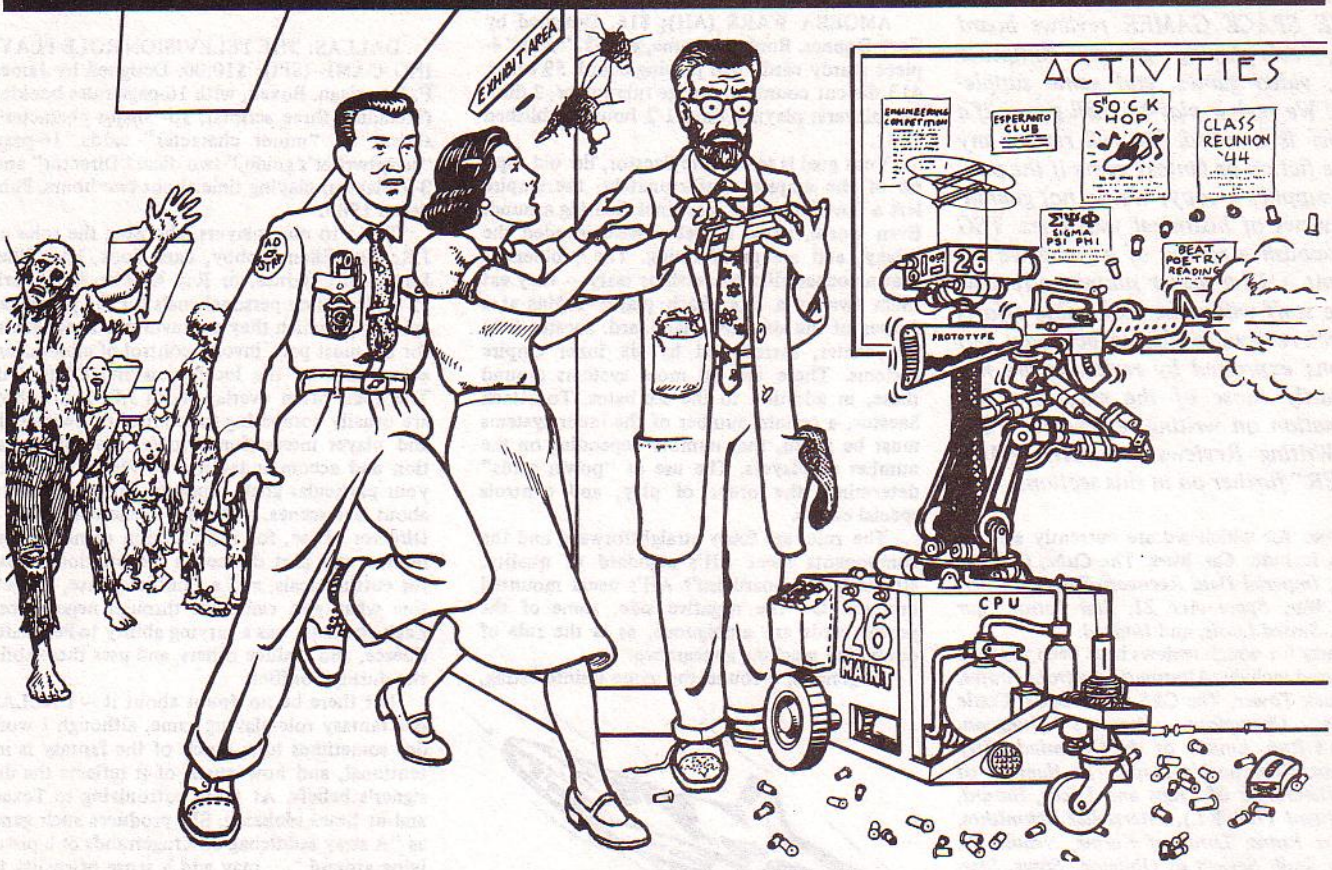
– Moving Paneuropean units farther than they could legitimately go (remember you only get the road bonus if you start on the road).

– Treating the defense factor of an Ogre secondary battery as 2 instead of 3.

– Resolving spillover fire at full strength instead of half.

–Phil Rennert

YOU ARE EARTH'S ONLY HOPE!



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Capsule Reviews

THE SPACE GAMER reviews board games, role-playing games, computer games, video games, and game supplements. We review play-by-mail games if a reviewer is enrolled. We will review any science fiction or fantasy game if the publisher supplies a copy. We do not guarantee reviews of historical wargames. TSG may publish a review of a game we are not sent – IF a reader submits a review.

The staff will make reasonable efforts to check reviews for factual accuracy, but opinions expressed by reviewers are not necessarily those of the magazine. For information on writing reviews for TSG, see "Writing Reviews for THE SPACE GAMER" further on in this section.

Games for which we are currently seeking reviews include: *Car Wars, The Cube, Galactic Attack, Imperial Data Recovery System, Killer, Robot War, Space Ace 21, Star Patrol, Star Rovers, Sword Lords,* and *Undead.*

Games for which reviews have been assigned or received include: *Aftermath, Asteroid Pirates, The Black Tower, The C&S Sourcebook, Castle Perilous, Champions, Dargon's Dungeon, Demon's Run, Empire of the Overmind, Fifty Starbases, Grimtooth's Traps, The Hammer of Thor, Handbook of Traps and Tricks, Hazard, High Guard* (2nd Ed.), *Interstellar Skirmishes, Into the Ruins, Lords of Karma, Nebula 19, Oregon Trail, Sewers of Oblivion, Sorag, Starships, The Sword and the Stars, Swords & Sorcerers, Sword Thrust, Thieves' Guild, Thieves' Guild II, Trillion Credit Squadron, Universe,* and *Weapons.*

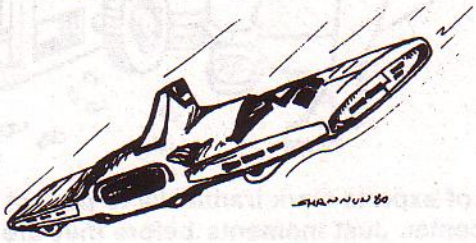
AMOEBA WARS (AH); $16. Designed by Gary Donner. Bookcase game, with 22" x 28" 4-piece sturdy cardboard playing board, 59 cards, 413 die-cut counters, 6-page rule folder, 2 dice. 2-6 players; playing time 1-2 hours. Published 1981.

Your goal is to capture Saestor, the old capital of the empire. Unfortunately, the empire left a few doomsday machines floating around. Even worse, space amoebae have invaded the galaxy, and are proliferating. The problem is that amoebae find space ships tasty – they eat them two at a bite. Each player begins at a corner of the six-sided mapboard. Saestor is in the center, surrounded by six inner empire systems. There are 30 more systems around these, in addition to the six bases. To attack Saestor, a certain number of the inner systems must be taken, that number depending on the number of players. The use of "power cards" determines the order of play, and controls special events.

The rules are fairly straightforward and the components meet AH's standard of quality, although the board isn't AH's usual mounted product. On the negative side, some of the power cards are ambiguous, as is the rule of doomsday machine appearance.

In general, I found the game uninteresting, but I can't necessarily say the same for you. I detect under-currents of *Risk* and *Cosmic Encounter* in AMOEBA WARS. Some of you will like the game, some won't. I will say this – I think $16 is pretty steep for what you get.

–David Ladyman



DALLAS: THE TELEVISION ROLE-PLAYING GAME (SPI); $10.00. Designed by James F. Dunnigan. Boxed, with 16-page rules booklet (including three scripts), 10 "major character" sheets, 56 "minor character" cards, 16-page "scriptwriter's guide," two dice. "Director" and 3-9 players; playing time about two hours. Published 1980.

Three to nine players, choosing the roles of J.R., Sue Ellen, Bobby, Pam, Jock, Miss Ellie, Lucy, Cliff Barnes, or Ray Krebbs, each work to achieve their personal goals for the particular episode in which they are involved. These goals, for the most part, involve control of minor characters such as the local press and Ewing Oil. The goals often overlap (both J.R. and Bobby are usually competing for control of Ewing Oil) and player interaction involves the confrontation and accommodation involved in achieving your particular goals. Episodes are divided into about five scenes, with each scene containing a Director phase, for introduction of new information and plot devices, a Negotiation phase, for cutting deals, and a Conflict phase, for getting what you can't get through negotiation. Each character has a varying ability to Persuade, Coerce, and Seduce others, and uses these abilities during Conflict.

Let there be no doubt about it – DALLAS is a fantasy role-playing game, although I wonder sometimes how much of the fantasy is intentional, and how much of it reflects the designer's beliefs. At times patronizing to Texas, and at times idolizing, SPI produces such gems as "A stray saddlebag of Krugerrands or a pistol lying around . . . may add a sense of reality to the game." Right. For a rushed product to answer a fad, DALLAS has achieved good characterizations of the Ewing clan, who are fantastic enough, and has invented plot devices as outrageous as those in the TV series. (When was the last time *you* had to bribe the Justice Department to keep them from validating an old Spanish Land Grant giving the Mexican-American Farm Workers title to your ranch?) The game's major asset is that it has absorbed the spirit of "Texas reality" found on television.

DALLAS has flaws, chiefly in the mechanics, but the director is given carte blanche to change or interpret any rule as he wishes. SPI emphasizes that it is presenting an RPG framework, and that the director must write his own episodes. The question is, how many people will want to play more than two or three episodes? Beyond that point, the enjoyment will be in dreaming up off-the-wall situations, rather than sitting down and trying to seduce J.R. into giving up Ewing Oil for the twentieth time. The characters don't develop, although a player's characterization might.

Is DALLAS a useful bridge between gaming and your "real world" friends? That might depend on how many DALLAS freaks you know that you would want to introduce to gaming. Hard core RPGers will probably want to add the game to their collection; characters' attributes and the conflict resolution system are novel enough, even if you have no interest in the television series. I wouldn't suggest it, though, if you buy your games for long-term playability – DALLAS just doesn't have lasting entertainment value.

– David Ladyman

WRITING REVIEWS FOR THE SPACE GAMER

Capsule Reviews

Most of the reviews we print will be "capsule" reviews – 400 words or less. We pay $5 for each capsule review accepted. We want to run a review for *every* new s-f or fantasy game or supplement.

Each capsule review should be five paragraphs long and contain:

(1) Basic information. Present these facts, in this order: NAME OF GAME (Publisher; price. Designer. (If applicable: "Supplement to ____," "Companion to ____," or similar note.) Format: list of components, with sizes of maps and rulebooks, number of counters, etc. Number of players; playing time. Publication date.

(2) General description of the game: background, the sides, course of play, special features, etc.

(3) Strong points. Discuss what is good about the game; in every game, there IS something worthwhile. "Fun" is a useless adjective. Be specific.

(4) Weak points. Every game has its problems, too. If the only faults you can find are minor ones, say so. If the game is fatally flawed, come right out and SAY SO. If you can phrase your criticisms as suggestions for improvement, do so.

(5) Summation. Your overall opinion of the game. Who should and should not buy it and why.

All reviews must be signed; the reviewer's name *will* be printed. No game may be reviewed by its designer, by a playtester, or by an employee of the publisher. (Designer's articles are welcome, but must be billed as such!) Final note: If you can write a complete review in less than the full 400 words, by all means do so.

This review format is designed to encourage fairness and to give the reader enough information to let him decide whether he wants to buy that game. Keep that in mind when you write. This is a short review, *not* a complete analysis. For those who want to write longer reviews, each issue will have one or two –

Featured Reviews

These will be game reviews 1,000 to 2,000 words long. They should contain *all the above information,* plus whatever else the reviewer wants to say. They may be written in any format. A featured review may cover either a new game or one that has been on the market for some time. If TSG has not already printed a capsule review, write one and submit it at the same time. We may even use both.

Since you missed *Ares* nr. 6 and the great game inside it, –here's your abbreviated edition

Pandora Tech

Transcript of Transmission from Eridani 6-K Mission:

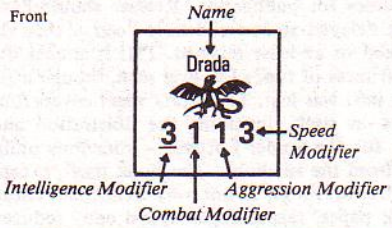
HOO! LOOK AT THAT ONE! IT'S A BIG SUCKER ALL RIGHT! HESSY ARE YOU COPYING?

Roger, Skraaling. Subject appears marsupial to me. Perhaps an early mammal...

LOOK AT IT JUMP! C'MON, HESSY, YOU EVER SEE ANYTHING JUMP LIKE THAT? MUST LEAP 15 METERS AT A TIME!

[2.6] The creatures and artifacts are encountered in the environs during the course of play. The player may attempt to capture or acquire them for purposes of victory.

SAMPLE CREATURE COUNTER



[8.2] Encounter Strategy Table

DIE	COMMUNICATE	CAPTURE OR KILL	FLEE
– 1	010	011	012
0	013	014	015
1	013	014	015
2	016*	017*	018*
3	019	020	018
4	019	020	018
5	016*	017*	018*

Facts for Fantasy

The Return of the King

According to Sir Thomas Malory, the author of the great fifteenth-century *Morte D'Arthur*, "sum men say in many partys of Inglonde that Kynge Arthur ys nat dede." Where these men said he went for the healing of his wounds was the island of Avalon, identified either as a sort of Celtic Never-Never-Land, like Tir n'a N'og, or as Glastonbury.

EXPEDITION EVENT PARAGRAPHS

001. If the distance travelled in the current interstellar jump is three hexes or greater (including the hex of origin), navigational error has put the *Pandora* slightly off-course; one extra tour month is expended. If the distance travelled is two hexes or less, no interstellar event occurs. Proceed to use of the Planet Table.

002. As the shuttle sets down, mechanical problems and unexpected terrain variation threaten to cause an accident. If the navigator is aboard the shuttle, go to ¶ 070. If the navigator is not aboard, go to ¶ 148

GAMES RATING CHART

SCIENCE FICTION & SCIENCE FANTASY

Title	Pub	Pub Date	Price	Accep	%	Comp	Time	Soli
1. Traveller	GDW	7/77	12	7.5	39	6.2	5	5.5
2. Imperium	GDW	12/77	10	7.3	32	6.1	6	2.5
3. Creature...Sheboygan	SPI	4/79	4	7.1	63	5.0	1	6.5
4. GEV	MGC	78	3	7.1	36	7.0	7	5.5
5. Freedom in the Galaxy	SPI	6/79	20	7.1	36	7.0	7	5.5
6. Ogre	MGC	5/77	3	7.0	52	4.8	1	6.5
7. Starfleet Battles	TFG	11/79	13	7.0	23	na	na	na
8. Cosmic Encounters	EP	76	12	7.0	23	3.5	1	2.0
9. Dark Nebula	GDW	2/80	6	6.8	11	5.6	2	2.5
10. Battlefleet: Mars	SPI	4/77	15	6.8	32	6.8	6	3.0
11. John Carter of Mars	SPI	5/79	20	6.7	32	6.0	4	5.5
12. Stellar Conquest	MGC	2/75	13	6.7	22	5.8	6	3.0
13. Objective: Moscow	SPI	3/78	27	6.5	18	5.0	30	5.0
14. Triplanetary	GDW	9/73	10	6.5	12	5.7	2	4.6

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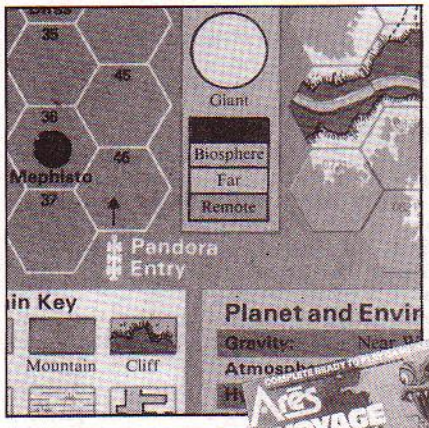

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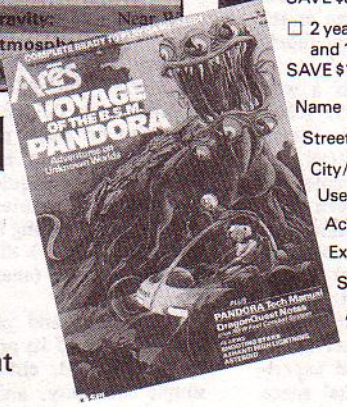

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DARK STARS (Simulations Canada); $14.00. Designed by Stephen M. Newberg. 9" x 6" 20-page rulebook, 255 die-cut counters, 22" x 28" map, boxed. For 2-4 players; playing time 1-20+ hours. Published 1980.

DARK STARS is a game of exploration and colonization *a la Stellar Conquest* with overtones of *Starforce*. It takes place in a globular cluster and involves the rivalry between three native races and (who else?) the intruding Terrans. Movement takes place on a rather drab interstellar display map until a star system is located. Then action moves to an interplanetary display map where habitable planets may be found and combat may occur with rival ships. Econ points are used to build new units or to raise the tech level of colonized planets; the more planets colonized, the more econ points become available for use to build ships to colonize even more planets – though an eye must be kept on each colony's stability (reflected by a chart in the back of the rules) as well. Three short scenarios and a campaign game, "The Long Reach," which can drag on for days depending on how conservative players are, are provided.

DARK STARS has some points of interest. Each race uses a different method of interstellar movement. For the Terrans, this is black hole-white hole transit. Though probably unrealistic, this does add variety to an otherwise routine system. The idea of each ring of hexes being an orbit for a possible planet on the interplanetary display, though not necessarily true to scale, is a nice touch. The interplanetary exploration is perhaps the most interesting part of the whole game.

Unfortunately, DARK STARS has many flaws. The rules are rather vague in places, and the economic system is not altogether satisfying. It has little to distinguish it from previous games of similar theme and does not handle the "borrowed" points as well as the originals. Combat will rarely occur until the end of the game, except between foolhardy players, as the system tends to discourage battle. The graphics leave much to be desired, with the possible exception of the planet counters, which are rather colorful.

Overall, while DARK STARS might prove a moderately interesting diversion for those who don't mind having to improvise a bit on rules and who wish a change from *Stellar Conquest* or other such games, its faults, coupled with its overinflated $14 price tag, are enough that most gamers should be advised to look elsewhere.

–William A. Barton

THE MECHANOID INVASION (Palladium Books); $3.75. Designed by Kevin Siembieda. One 7" x 10" 50-page booklet, 4-page errata sheet. Two or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

THE MECHANOID INVASION is a welcome addition to the growing list of SF RPGs now on the market. Designed by artist Kevin Siembieda, THE MECHANOID INVASION concerns the survival of a group of human colonists on the planet Gideon E, which has been overrun and defoliated by a horde of cyborgic creatures known to the beleaguered humans as "Mechanoids." Human characters must survive and battle the invaders with the occasional help (or hindrance) of the native Rovers and a slew of futuristic weapons – blasters, laser rifles, particle beam rifles, plasma tanks and experimental dreadnaughts (converted orbital space shuttles). Game time is limited to five months – if the colonists can hold out that long – when the "Intergalactic Federation" will be able to intervene (or until the second book in the Mechanoid trilogy is released).

The most striking aspect of THE MECHANOID INVASION is Siembieda's illustrations. Any of these would grace the pages of the most professional works of the "big" companies. Although more "space operaish" than realistic, the weapons of TMI are quite interesting – and lethal. Even if one had no interest in TMI itself, these could be transferred to another SF RPG – *Traveller* perhaps – with little effort.

The worst part of THE MECHANOID INVASION is the text – as bad as the illos are good, in fact. The author admits that the copy wasn't proofed (obviously) due to approaching deadlines for publication. Release should have been delayed so it could have been – then reworked or at least retyped. TMI is almost the worst mess of typos I've ever seen, though little vital info was lost. The errata sheet covers four pages in itself, including the illustration and data for the Spider Fortress – somehow omitted from the rulebook. The book itself, except for the drawings, is not very attractive; cheap stock paper, ragged-edged typed copy reduced to the point of being difficult to read. Fortunately, the game is strong (and fun) enough to overcome the failings of the production.

If you can overlook its amateurish production (and the price helps in this), I think you'll find THE MECHANOID INVASION worth the investment. It should provide some enjoyable role playing in an SF setting as a break from *Traveller* or your other favorite SF RPG.

– William A. Barton

SHUTTLEWARS (Paranoia Press); free. Designed by Henry Biancardi with Chuck Kallenbach II. 8½" x 11" sheet of rules and map. One to two players; playing time 1-5 minutes. Published 1981.

SHUTTLEWARS is a tactical micro-minigame of orbital space combat in the 1980s. It consists simply of one sheet, half of which contains the rules, the other half the map, printed on the back of Paranoia Press' latest products list. Coins are suggested as playing pieces, a nickel or dime for the space shuttle (what would NASA say to this?) and three pennies to represent each of three killer satellites, which may be either laser satellites (heads) or mine satellites (tails), depending on a flip of the marker. The object of the shuttle player is to orbit across the board, taking out killer satellites with his single pulse laser. The object of the satellite player is to destroy the shuttle. The game moves quickly and can be learned and played in minutes – just the sort of thing needed when waiting for your order at the local pizza parlor or as a diversion during those long minutes between (ahem) with your wife or girlfriend.

The speed and playability of SHUTTLEWARS is one of its prime attractions – and the price ain't bad, either. Combat resolution is simple and easy, and you always know just where you are in any game. And even if you lose, there's always time for another game on the spot – revenge can come quickly.

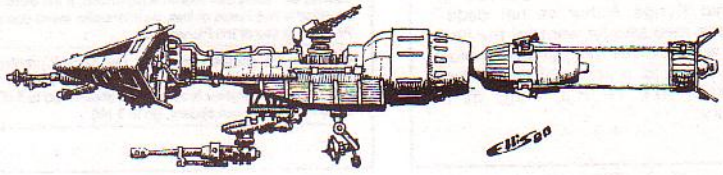
The sole problem with SHUTTLEWARS that I can detect, other than problems playing when you're flat broke (just spent all your money at a con, just paid your taxes, etc.) is that the random determination of what type of satellites are on the board allows the possibility that all may be mine satellites, which the shuttle can easily outmaneuver and shoot down.

For the price, you can't beat it. Available for SASE or with any order from Paranoia Press.

–William A. Barton

SPACE RAID! (House of Pilgrim, 361 Pismo Ave., Pismo, CA 93449); $16. Designed by John Shoop. Boxed, with 15-page rulebook, 22" x 22" folding mounted board, 96 plastic ship counters, 2 reference cards. Playing time 40 minutes. Published 1981.

SPACE RAID! "is designed to simulate actual real-space conditions. This is to prepare future commanders and pilots for all possible combinations of enemy attack. . . . It is hoped that this game will help individuals develope (sic) the creative skills and combat knowledge necessary to keep Earth free from alien domination." Each player commands a fleet of 48 ships, divided into six ship classes. Movement is semi-hidden, in that counters are visible, but counter *type* is hidden from the opponent. The object of the game is to discover which of 10 star squares represents the enemy's Star-Base, and to destroy it with one of your Nova-Star-Blasters.



SPACE RAID! is a simple game to learn and play, but then so is checkers, and checkers has intrigued strategists for years. It is possible that, given months of play, I could become similarly intrigued by SPACE RAID! But don't bet on it. The components, including the four color game board, have a professional appearance, but they suffer from the same general problem that the rest of the game has: to a wargamer (even an SF gamer) they're just not very interesting.

There are a few specific problems in the rules, including the fact that the first player to move is decided before set-up, giving that player a considerable advantage. (A first strike can take you out of the game before you move.) The biggest problem, however, is in the combat system. Given a multiple ship attack, it never specifies how to determine which ships, and how many, are lost. (I can give you five possible interpretations of the examples they list.)

I believe the designers are trying very hard to convince you that this game is worth playing. (Let me cite 30 exclamation points in 10 fairly brief pages of rules.) If you are a wargamer, it isn't. It isn't challenging enough for regular gaming, or fun enough for those 3 a.m. sessions. Even for your 8-year-old niece or nephew, I think you could make a better buy, at half the price.

– David Ladyman

SUPERHEROS AND SUPERVILLAINS (Heritage); $15.00. Game design by Brian Phillips, figure design by David Helber. 8 25mm figures, 10 paints, brush, 4-page game rules, 4-page painting guide and figure data, 2 dice, plastic tray, boxed. For 2-8 players; playing time 30 minutes to an hour. Released 1981.

SUPERHEROS AND SUPERVILLAINS is Heritage Models' latest 25mm miniature adventure gaming kit. This set pits the four Knights of Justice against the four evil members of the Syndicate of Terror led by the nefarious Doctor Death. As did previous Heritage kits, the set includes all the miniature figures needed to play, game rules, a guide to painting the figures, dice, paints and brush in a boxed set. The new sets have replaced the old, easily crushed styrofoam tray with a sturdier plastic one, making storage easier.

All the figures in this kit are nicely crafted, better so than most superhero miniature lines I've seen. And most of them really *look* like superheros or supervillains. While the rules included with the set are adequate – though not outstanding by any means – for introductory play by those new to miniature gaming, most experienced superhero enthusiasts will probably want to use one of the more extensive rules sets available on the market. For those wishing to emulate the superstars of Marvel Comics, Doctor Death will serve nicely as Doctor Doom, Behemoth could pass as the Thing, or, with a coat of green paint, even the Hulk; and Pyro could be any number of flaming superheros or villains.

While most of the figures are relatively free of flaws or flash, Behemoth in particular will need a bit of trimming before painting and use. Though well made, the Crimson Crusader (no relation to The Flash) with his plasma blade and Donarr with his Viking throwing ax are a bit disappointing as superheros, appearing more like refugees from Heritage's *Star Commandos* and fantasy sets respectively. Black Scorpion is just a bit *too* voluptuous, surpassing most comic book standards. And old hands at miniature gaming will probably wish to skip the painting guide instructions in favor of their own imaginative touches.

Though experienced miniaturists may wish to wait for these figures to come out in individual sets, superhero fans who wish to break into miniatures will find SUPERHEROS AND SUPERVILLAINS a solid introductory set, even for its $15.00 price.

– *William A. Barton*

THEY'VE INVADED PLEASANTVILLE (TSR); $4.00. Designed by Michael Price. One 4" x 7" 20-page rules booklet, 11½" x 14" map, 84 die-cut counters, two 6-sided dice, plastic box. For two players; playing time 30-60 minutes. Published 1981.

THEY'VE INVADED PLEASANTVILLE! Who are "they"? Why, those nasty aliens with their implants, of course – taking over and controlling the minds of respectable townspeople. And it's up to you, as the only one of the townsfolk who is aware of the invasion, to alert your fellow townsmen to the danger and avert the aliens's plan to establish a beachhead right here in Pleasantville.

As trite as the idea behind THEY'VE INVADED PLEASANTVILLE may sound, the game is actually rather fun as you attempt to convert townspeople to your way of thinking – either by persuasion or implant. And it does simulate rather nicely the classic movie situation of the one character in the know who must convince others that the aliens are among us – before it's too late. Several of the tables that must be consulted when taking certain actions have interesting results – such as the alien implant exploding when you try to remove it from a victim. (Bye, bye, Earthling.) The rules are generally clear – with a few lapses – and easily grasped with one reading.

Though cut from the same general mold as TSR's other minigames, PLEASANTVILLE isn't quite as pleasing graphically; the counters are bland black and white minus symbols of any sort (just name and stats), and the map consists merely of abstract irregular boxes to represent the town. The 12-turn limit can be a little hard on the town player, especially if he has trouble convincing enough influential people early on. The necessity for the alien player to take counters off the map and hide behind a "screen" to take over townspeople is a bit cumbersome, but seems about the only solution in a game of this scope.

Unless you shudder every time you remember those old late-show sci-fi flicks or you tend to shun anything less complex than *Freedom in the Galaxy*, you should find THEY'VE INVADED PLEASANTVILLE an amusing little diversion.

– *William A. Barton*

VAMPYRE (TSR); $4.00. Designed by Philip A. Shreffler. 4" x 7" 20-page rulebooklet, 11½" x 14" map, backprinted, 84 die-cut counters, two 6-sided dice, plastic box. For 2-6 players; playing time 30-90 minutes. Published 1981.

VAMPYRE is one of the first in TSR's new line of micro – excuse me – *mini*games, introductory games for ages 12 and up. Players take the part of vampire hunters Jonathan Harker, John Seward, Quincey Morris, Lord Godalming, Mina Murray, and, of course, Dr. Van Helsing in an attempt to track down and destroy the prince of darkness, Dracula himself. In the basic game, players trek across a map of Transylvania attempting to find Dracula's hidden coffins in the map's various haunted locales, along with items such as guns, knives, silver bullets, crucifixes and holy water that may help them defeat Dracula and his minions, meanwhile fighting off attacks by wolves, bears, vampires and other players who may have been turned into nosferatu or werewolves thanks to the bite of the fanged undead. Once one player has found and destroyed three of Dracula's hidden coffins (winning the basic game), the map is turned

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- Each turn or 'year' is comprised of 15 movement turns.
- A player controls up to 16 forces, each force being allowed up to 15 movement turns a year.

All of this for only $12.00 a game. A player wishing to drop from competition or being disposed of by opponents will be refunded $2.00 for each unplayed year.

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over and all players (including those who are nosferatu and werewolfish) enter Dracula's castle to confront the fiend himself.

VAMPYRE is rather interesting, in its subject matter. (Never mind that there are at least two other games on the same subject released nearly simultaneously with this one.) Those who are fans of the late night horror movies – *Son of the Daughter of the Bride of the Girlfriend of the Cousin of the Dog of Dracula* and so on – should find it almost irresistible. ("Look into my eyes – you vill buy zis game . . ."). The graphics are rather nice. It is fast playing, and even rather fun if you don't expect too much from it.

To those looking for a strategy game, VAMPYRE might seem a bit anemic. Most of what occurs in the game does so by chance and the roll of the die – including movement factors. About the only thing a player can decide for himself is which way to go – and this can be limited greatly. The rules are a bit sloppy in places, too, not really explaining how, for instance, a player can obtain an item such as the Host through one of the "Strange Occurrences" on the encounter table, when its counter (necessary for possession) is still hidden in one of the locales on the map.

Still, VAMPYRE can be a fun little "beer and pretzels" game if not taken seriously. It's even fun sinking your fangs into one of your fellow players after you've grown your own fur or bat wings. But if you have to be the master of your own fate – avoid VAMPYRE like you-know-who would a crucifix.

– William A. Barton

SUPPLEMENTS

ARGON GAMBIT/DEATH STATION, Double Adventure 3 (GDW); $4.98. Designed by Frank Chadwick/Marc Miller. One 6" x 9" 48-page booklet. Referee and 2-8 players; playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

ARGON GAMBIT/DEATH STATION is GDW's newest double adventure for *Traveller*. The winning format of Double Adventure 1, that of combining a planetary adventure with the exploration of a "mystery" starship, is repeated to good effect in this release. DEATH STATION concerns the players' attempt to discover why the 400-ton Lysani Laboratories lab ship in orbit above the planet Gladden in the Solomani Rim sector has ceased to reply to radio calls from the planet. In ARGON GAMBIT, the adventurers are hired on to burglarize documents from the villa of a known criminal on the balkanized planet Jacosz, a hotbed of Solomani/Imperial intrigue. While DEATH STATION is a fairly straightforward search-and-find mission, ARGON GAMBIT is more of a thinking adventure. Both scenarios provide pregenerated characters for use if desired, and both supply NPCs for referee convenience in sudden encounter situations. DEATH STATION adds a couple of new items of equipment as well.

Probably the most interesting feature of DEATH STATION is its lab ship. Complete specifications and deck plans, set in the same format as those in *Traders and Gunboats*, are given for this ship, which up to now has existed only as a capsule description in *Citizens of the Imperium*. Even referees who don't wish to run the adventure would be advised to pick up a copy just for the plans to the wheel-shaped vessel. Also of interest is the history of the Solomani people and the Solomani movement outlined at the end of ARGON GAMBIT, further fleshing out the future history of the *Traveller* universe.

The main "failing" of ARGON GAMBIT/DEATH STATION is in its lack of campaign applications. Both adventures take place in the Harlequin subsector of the yet-to-be-released Solomani Rim sector, and neither features a subsector map. The planetary data tell in which hexes each world is located, but nothing else about the subsector is revealed, making it difficult to link the two in any way until Supplement 10 is released. I would also have liked to have seen plans for the villa the group is told to raid, through almost any plans may be used. (Judges Guild's *Tancred* has a set of plans that would work well here.)

Overall, ARGON GAMBIT/DEATH STATION is well worth the devoted *Traveller* ref's attention. Both scenarios demonstrate GDW's usual standards of quality and add even greater depth to the richness of the *Traveller* universe – in addition to being good adventures. Recommended.

– William A. Barton

BEYOND (Paranoia Press); $3.50. Designed by Donald P. Rapp, map by Chuck Kallenbach II. Supplement approved for *Traveller*. One 6" x 9" 29-page booklet, 11" x 17" map. Published 1981.

BEYOND is Paranoia Press's second approved-for-*Traveller* subsector, located directly spinward and rimward of the Spinward Marches, spinward of the Out Rim Void and to trailing of Paranoia's earlier Vanguard Reaches. Like *Vanguard Reaches*, BEYOND lists each planet within its boundaries, subsector by subsector, in essentially the same format as GDW's *The Spinward Marches*. It includes extensive library data concerning the historical, social, political and biological life of the sector and features, rather than individual subsector maps, a complete sector map showing each subsector as part of the whole with connecting jump routes and overlapping political entities. Two new races, and a variety of organizations, are among the inhabitants of BEYOND.

BEYOND is a well-conceived supplement, showing much originality and thought. Among its most useful points is the extension of the *Traveller* UPP descriptions to cover planetary sizes, atmospheres, government types and law levels beyond those covered by GDW itself. Designer Don Rapp obviously had tongue firmly in cheek when naming many of the planets of BEYOND, resulting in a series of in-jokes recognizable by devotees of SF and fantasy literature.

Though very well done overall, there are a few problems with BEYOND, most of which are connected with the map. Certain features of the map conflict with the text. For example, The Dunes is a 3,000-mile diameter planet in the text, but is shown as an asteroid belt on the map. And a subcapital of the I'Shred*Ni Heptad is one hex off on the map from its listing in the book. More puzzling is the location of a planet listed as a member of Die Weltbund right in the middle of the xenophobic I'Shred*Ni Heptad and a Zydarian Codominium planet two subsectors away from the Codominium in the Aslani subsector.

All in all, BEYOND will prove to be a fascinating area for any *Travellers* to visit. Every devoted player should add it to his *Traveller* collection.

– William A. Barton

CULTS OF TERROR (Chaosium); $9.95. Designed by Lynn Willis, Greg Stafford and Charlie Krank. *RuneQuest* supplement. One 8½" x 11" 96-page rulebook. Published 1981.

CULTS OF TERROR describes nine hideously evil deities and their cults. It presents an overall cosmology and history of the *RuneQuest* world of Glorantha, and describes each cult against that background: the mythical and political organization, requirements for membership, advancement to Rune Lord or Rune Priest, special spells and skills. There's an adventure story, a few paragraphs in each cult description, showing how cult members would appear in a game.

CULTS OF TERROR is a model of creativity, coherency, and playability. It allows you to expand and develop the parent game, giving unlimited ideas to spark your own imagination. It is sufficiently well done that you could use these cults in a *RuneQuest* game without a Glorantha background, or even transplant them into a different fantasy game.

Admittedly, ten dollars is a pretty steep price when you can get supplements, or even whole games, for half that. Moreover, unlike most supplements, this isn't an adventure you can sit down and play, but just background which cannot be used all at once. And, in spite of the book's complete, vivid descriptions of its subjects, people who don't play *RuneQuest* probably won't derive much benefit from it.

But, if you play *RuneQuest*, or even if you just want to see what an excellent game aid can be, you'll buy CULTS OF TERROR. (Or Vivamort, Lord of the Undead, will eat you!)

– Ron Pehr

FURIOSO (Dimension Six, Inc.); $7.00. Designed by Davy Davis. Tournament-style adventure for *Dungeons and Dragons*. For seven players. One 8½" x 11" 64-page booklet. Playing time three to five hours. Published 1980.

This adventure is based upon Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, or rather a small part of that epic. The (presumably evil) religious loon Cimosco has dredged up a fearsome weapon (a cannon) long buried at sea, and a concerned king has called in a band of adventurers to destroy the thing.

FURIOSO is Dimension Six's best production to date. It is certainly not riddled with inconsistencies, like *Mountain of Mystery*. The artwork cannot be faulted – mostly Gustave Dore (oddly enough, not his work for *Orlando*

Furioso, but rather pieces from "Rime of the Ancient Mariner").

There are, however, disappointments aplenty. This is a reasonable tournament-style adventure, but it is wholly unsuited for "regular" campaign play as presented. In effect, FURIOSO is a tactical exercise, demanding that the characters act as cleverly, forcefully, and quickly as possible, without wasting time on such trivialities as role-playing. It becomes a case of "Face Obstacle 1. Kill/trick/circumnavigate Obstacle 1. Face Obstacle 2." And on and on. The characters, with a borrowed Ring of Resurrection, are likely to be alive at the end of the adventure; it becomes a matter simply of whether they do it on time. And when the adventure ends, it ends, with these clever but boring characters stranded on an island.

Players who appreciate adventures which lead their characters from obstacle to obstacle toward an inevitable end will probably enjoy this. DMs looking for another adventure to incorporate into their worlds, and world-builders who admire *Orlando Furioso*, should come up with something of their own.

– Aaron Allston

GLIMMERDRIFT REACHES (Judges Guild); $4.98. Designed by Dave Sering and Steve Crow. Approved for use with *Traveller*. One 8½' x 11" 32-page guidebook, 22" x 34" sector map backed with 8 planetary maps. Published 1981.

GLIMMERDRIFT REACHES is Judges Guild's second *Traveller* star sector, opening up new areas of adventure for *Traveller* players. The Glimmerdrift Reaches lie directly rimward of the Ley Sector with the spinward rimward edge near *High Passage's* Old Expanses sector. The map of the Reaches covers the entire sector, delineating the various political boundaries of the Imperium and other political groups and showing the various jump routes between important systems. On the back of the sector map, eight of the planets in the Glimmerdrift Reaches are mapped out for planetary adventure sessions.

One of GLIMMERDRIFT REACHES' most interesting features is the profusion of new star empires for players to visit. In fact, Imperial influence impinges strongly upon only two areas in the whole sector, providing ample opportunity for extra danger and seething intrigues to inject new life into a campaign.

Like the *Ley Sector* map, the map of GLIMMERDRIFT REACHES fails to outline the borders of the individual subsectors. This is less a problem here than in *Ley*, though, as the traveller to the Reaches will be more interested in which empire he is entering than the particular subsector it occupies. The information given on some of the star empires is a bit too sketchy in places – more data on their armed forces, for instance, would have been helpful. I would have preferred a set of space encounter tables for the various parts of the Reaches, as was found in *Ley Sector*, and perhaps more info on peculiar flora and fauna in place of the too vague rumor tables. The planetary maps' location on the back of the sector map is a pain, requiring a lot of shuffling around to use both. And now, it seems, the Imperium has *two* Darkling subsectors – one here and one in Paranoia Press's *Beyond*. Can't someone coordinate such things?

Overall, GLIMMERDRIFT REACHES is a useful play aid for *Traveller* and should help make adventuring on the Trailing edge of the Imperium as diverse and as exciting as that on the Spinward side has been.

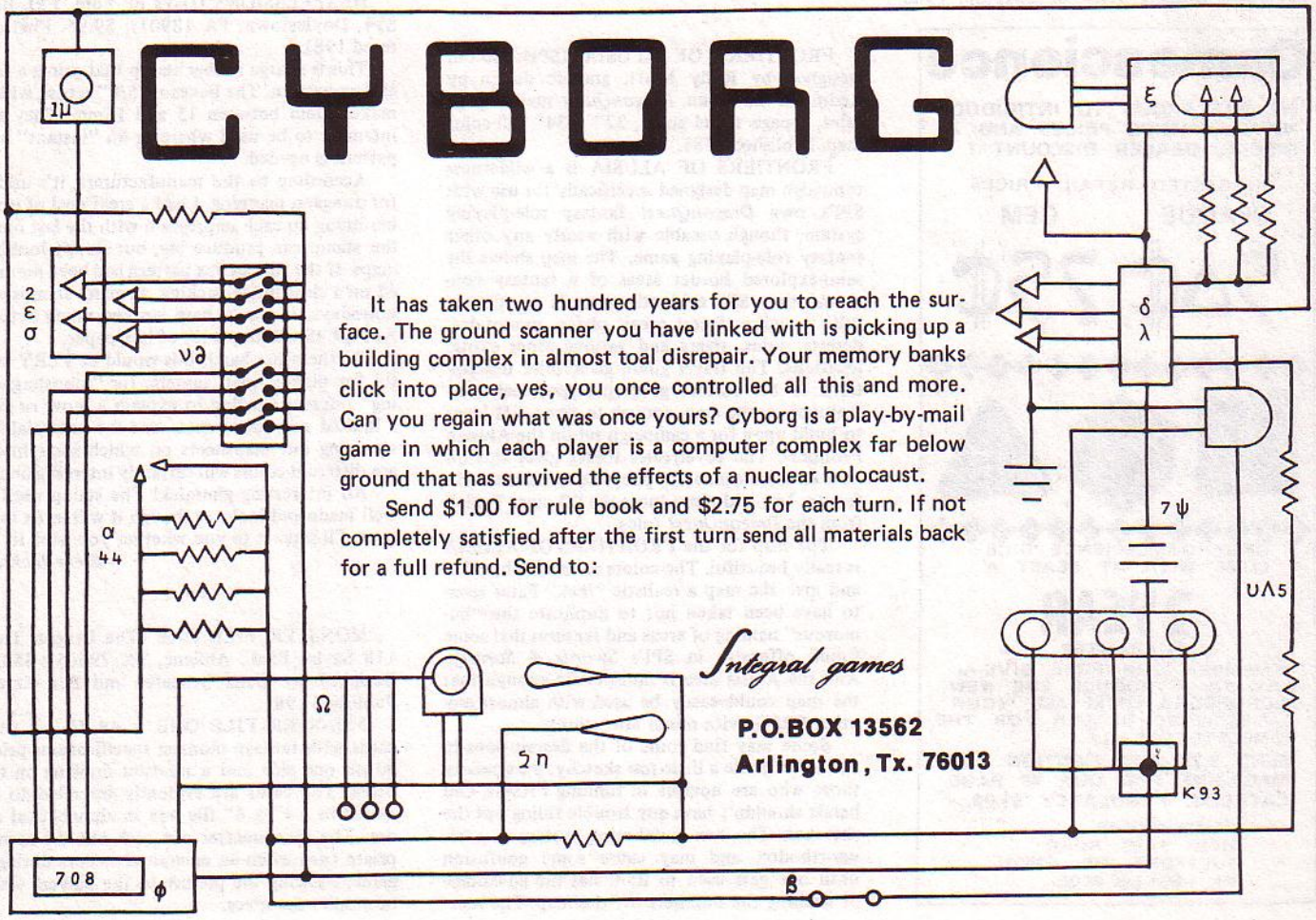
– William A. Barton

I.S.C.V. KING RICHARD (FASA); $10.00. Designed by Jordan Weisman. Approved for use with *Traveller*. (Designed to be used with Martian Metals miniatures.) One 8½" x 11" 8-page book, 21 11" x 17" sheets 15mm deck plans, bagged. Published 1981.

The I.S.C.V. KING RICHARD is a 5000-ton "luxury liner of the first class." As with earlier FASA ships, the deck plans are black and white, drawn with the half-inch square grid. The text describes the history of the ship and provides descriptions of each deck. In a departure from earlier FASA vessels, KING RICHARD is graced with a competent cover drawing (by William H. Keith, who often illustrates for GDW) and a USP giving *High Guard* stats for the ship. Details are more fully explained than in earlier FASA ships.

KING RICHARD, though more costly than the earlier ships, actually gives the buyer his money's worth in terms of material and completeness: more than four times the number of deck plans at only twice the price of the last ship. Most of the objections I had to their earlier ships have been overcome in this offering. The *King Richard* itself has many interesting features. I like the overview showing air ducts in each deck and the touches such as the swimming pool, theatres, nighclubs, casinos, and shops that give the ship the *feel* of a luxury liner.

Of course, like most efforts, there are some bugs in KING RICHARD. Several of the deck plans are faded in spots. The extra length of the decks of the *Richard* made it necessary to run some decks on two or three sheets, sometimes splitting staterooms and other areas in two. A few of the deck descriptions are a bit vague. The biggest problem is the text. While FASA took the trouble to space lines so as to


CYBORG
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have an even right margin, giving the text a professional appearance, they failed to do much in the way of proofing. The text is full of spelling and/or typographical errors, as bad as, if not worse than, their earlier products. FASA should definitely hire a professional copy editor/proofreader – or at least someone with a good command of the language – if they can't find anyone suitable among their own ranks.

Although the quality of their earlier products made me hesitant to try this one out, in I.S.C.V. KING RICHARD, FASA has pretty much redeemed themselves. You should find the KING RICHARD an interesting addition to your campaign. Now, if they'd only redo those earlier ships . . .

(They did! See letter, p. 39.)

–William A. Barton

THE NIGHTMARE MAZE OF JIGRESH (Judges Guild); $2.00. Designed by Michael E. Mayeau. Approved for use with *Empire of the Petal Throne.* One 8¼" x 11" 6-page book. 2 or more players; playing time varies. Published 1981.

THE NIGHTMARE MAZE OF JIGRESH is Judges Guild's first approved play aid for *Empire of the Petal Throne.* The adventure concerns the players' quest into a temple of a long-dead priest. The temple is in the shape of a treacherous maze, guarded by the undead creatures of two demon lords and containing both the treasure left by those who never left the maze and some interesting items of its own. The adventure provides player and referee maps of the maze, a background of its origin, room and guard post descriptions, wandering monster and treasure tables, two new monsters (the "Bat Wings" and the "Heros of Srukarum") and two excerpts from *The Book of Eibon Bindings* concerning the demon lords Srukarum and Tkel.

Though rather short, the adventure is complete and shouldn't require too much preparation by any referee to run. It will be especially handy for any EPTers who want to search those labyrinths said to be under the surface of Tekumel (its actual location being near the City of Sarku). The adventure is well thought through and should provide a formidable exercise for all but the most powerful of EPT characters. The background history fits nicely into that of EPT.

The main problem I find with TNMOJ is that the maze really *is* a nightmare! I certainly wouldn't want to take a character into it (and neither would the author, as he so readily confesses). The maze has so *many* twists and turns and dead-ends that I fear many players may grow bored before they find anything of worth. The only things to break the boredom are the wandering monsters – and we know how welcome *those* become after a while. The players' map (providing they ever manage to find a copy in the maze) is just a bit small, making it hard to distinguish individual paths. And I'd advise strongly against running lower level characters through this one.

Still, if you have characters of at least level 5 in your EPT campaign, and the players aren't the sort who lose interest quickly, THE NIGHTMARE MAZE OF JIGRESH may prove to be an interesting change of pace for your Tekumelian excursions.

–William A. Barton

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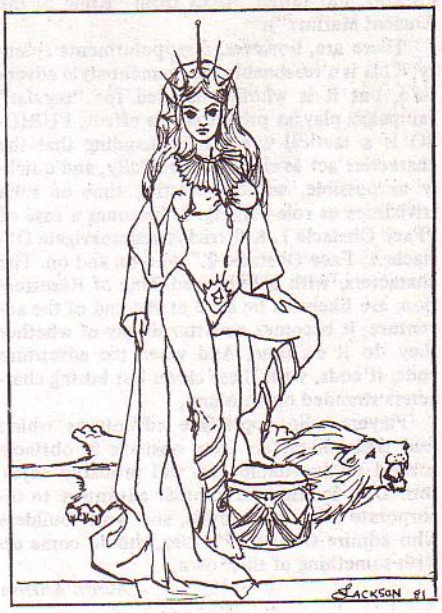
PLAY AIDS

FRONTIERS OF ALUSIA (SPI); $5.00. Designed by Rudy Kraft, graphic design by Redmond Simonsen. *DragonQuest* map. 4-page rules, 4-page travel guide, 22" x 34" full-color map. Published 1981.

FRONTIERS OF ALUSIA is a wilderness campaign map designed specifically for use with SPI's own *DragonQuest* fantasy role-playing system, though useable with nearly any other fantasy role-playing game. The map shows the semi-explored border areas of a fantasy continent that SPI evidently intends to map in full, including forest areas, plains, mountains, deserts, ruins, rivers and various other exotic locations. The travel guide gives brief descriptions of the various geographic/political areas featured on the map, enough to give a GM ideas to build upon for a campaign set on the Alusian Frontiers. The cover/rules folder gives tips on how to use the map, supplies an extensive terrain feature key and reproduces the "Danger Table" from the *DragonQuest* rules.

The map for the FRONTIERS OF ALUSIA is really beautiful. The colors are nicely blended and give the map a realistic "feel." Pains seem to have been taken not to duplicate the "humorous" naming of areas and features that some found offensive in SPI's *Swords & Sorcery.* And the Alusia area is nonspecific enough that the map could easily be used with almost any other FRPG, with minor alterations.

Some may find some of the descriptions in the travel guide a little *too* sketchy, particularly those who are novices to running FRPGs. Old hands shouldn't have any trouble filling out the sketches. The hex numbering system is a bit unorthodox and may cause some confusion until one gets used to it; it has the advantage of keeping the numbers off the map. The repetition of the "Danger Table" seems a bit unnecessary, too. *DragonQuest* refs will already have it; players of other systems probably won't use it at all.



FRONTIERS OF ALUSIA looks to be a handy playing aid for nearly any FRPG and should prove particularly useful to *DragonQuest* players looking for a setting for their campaign.

–William A. Barton

HEXPRESSIONS (Days of Yore, P.O. Box 814, Doylestown, PA 18901); $9.95. First offered 1981.

This is a large rubber stamp that prints a seven-hex pattern. The hexes are 5/8" across, which makes them between 15 and 16mm. They are intended to be used wherever an "instant" hex pattern is needed.

According to the manufacturers, it's useful for dungeon mapping. I had a great deal of trouble lining up each impression with the last ones; the stamp can produce big, but sloppy-looking maps. If the rubber hex pattern had been mounted on a clear lucite backing, as many stamps are nowadays, it would have worked much better. And $9.95 will buy a lot of hex paper.

On the other hand, this would be VERY useful for play-by-mail gamers, for "monstergaming" referees needing to explain a move or give a limited amount of data. And the potential for stamping out mapsheets on which some hexes are different colors will certainly interest gamers.

An interesting gimmick! The stamp itself is well made and looks as though it will last a long time. I'll leave it to you whether you need it.

– Steve Jackson

MONSTER FILE ONE (The Dragon Tree, 118 Sayles Blvd., Abilene, TX 79605); $5.00. Designed by Dana Schaefer and Ben Ezzell. Published 1981.

MONSTER FILE ONE is 48 5½" x 3½" cards with fantasy monster specifications printed on one side and a monster drawing on the other. The cards are evidently intended to be stored in a 4" x 6" file box in alphabetical order. The gamesmaster can pick out the appropriate card when an encounter occurs during a game, showing the picture to the players while he studies the specs.

The drawings are good, though some show much more detail than others. They are at least as good as those in the *AD&D Monster Manual*. The cards are well-printed but hard on the eyes, owing to the all-capitals, reduced size, 7 by 5 dot matrix printing.

The format severely limits the quality of the monsters. No outstanding monster can be described in anything so brief. The statistics given are evidently related to a version of D&D: armor class, hit dice (including d6s, 8s, and 10s), attack damage, alignment, move, intelligence, number appearing, and monster level from 1 to 20. In fact, in many ways the monsters remind one of the original three D&D books – short descriptions, not very well written, sometimes incomplete, with quite a few typographical, grammatical, and syntactical errors. The monsters are derived from diverse literary sources, comics, even a cartoon and a boardgame; but the hit dice and damage inflicted are rather overblown, as often happens when fans try to devise monsters for D&D games that have got out of hand. The mean monster level is 9.9 (median 9), mean hit dice 8.65 (median 8). (Divide monster level by two and round up to get something akin to AD&D levels.) As a whole, the monsters tend to be run-of-the-mill; at any rate, I found none that I will use myself. They are not as useful as, say, the monsters one sees in *White Dwarf*, and certainly not in any way approaching the standards of monsters in *Dragon* magazine.

By 1974 standards this is a decent set – better than *All the World's Monsters I*, for example – but by 1981 standards the monsters do not show well. If the format appeals to you you might try this set or the planned MONSTER FILE TWO. Otherwise, you'll have to decide if a few usable monsters are worth $5.00. I don't think so.

– Lewis Pulsipher

MINIATURES

KNIGHTS AND MAGICK (Heritage); $2.95 to $4.95 for packs of one to six (usually two mounted or six foot figures). 25mm fantasy figures designed for use with the *Knights and Magick* gaming system. Released 1980.

This is an extensive fantasy line consisting of both general army types, and specific creatures and character types described in the rules. Most packs consist of fairly standard medieval knights and men-at-arms with the usual supporting cast of clerics, demons, and skeletons. There are also some original types such as angels and saints not usually encountered in most figure lines.

The main advantage of this figure line is the fact that they have been designed to accompany a set of rules. The castings match the descriptions in the rules quite well, and should be very helpful in making the *Knights and Magick* system come alive.

The quality of the sculpting does not seem to come up to the standards of some other lines from Heritage such as the Fantastiques or Dungeon Dwellers lines. This is especially evident in the dragon and dragon-like creatures. The castings are lino-type metal, which has some advantages, notably increased resistance to breakage. This same characteristic makes the figures less malleable and more brittle, and impossible to modify without breaking and regluing them.

Unless you are looking for figures specifically for a *Knights and Magick* game, there are better figure lines available. Only those figure types not covered by other lines are really worth acquiring.

– Spalding Boldrick

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COMPUTER GAMES

APPLE-OIDS (California Pacific); $29.95. 32K disk by Tom Luhrs for the Apple II. 1 player; playing time 5 minutes. Cannot be saved. Published 1981.

This is *Asteroids*, except one sees little apples drifting across the screen. There is no explanation for this astronomical phenomenon. (Also, on the same disk is a "bonus game," a hi-res version of *Little Brick Out.*)

This is not an original game, but the execution is competent. You can fire by pressing any number key; this keeps your keys from wearing out. Acceleration is nonsimultaneous. The use of sound brightens the game. There are three sizes of asteroids, and two kinds of hostile ships. Even the starting setup is challenging for a beginner. If he does manage to destroy all the asteroids, the game resets with more. There is a bonus ship for every 10,000 points.

I have never figured out why anyone would send a perfectly good ship to shoot at asteroids, but if that's your scene, you will enjoy this game.

–Forrest Johnson

PORK BARREL (Ramware); $9.95. 16K cassette by George Blank for the TRS-80. 1-5 players; playing time 1 hour or less. Published 1979.

You are an aspiring young politico. A variety of bills cross your desk. Carefully, you weigh the balance of your district's opinion. Those consituents that indicate that they'll back their feelings with contributions to your reelection fund are more equal than the others. As election time approaches, you buy advertising in all the media. Win the first election by a landslide and all you do is insure that things will be tougher the next time around.

Essentially the game gives you an explanation of each bill, then the breakdown of how the various pressure groups react. The computer then lets you know if your party or the President want a certain vote. Before election the computer lets you allocate advertising between the various media. Then it shows you how the voting went. If you win reelection, the process starts over.

My only complaint is that the challenge is NOT in being reelected. That's easy if you're willing to vote as the polls dictate. Rather the game is supposed to provide the player with a chance to vote his "conscience" and still try for reelection.

If you can find people who'll pretend to be politicians with conscience, this game is fine. If you play to win, look elsewhere.

–Jon Mishcon

PROJECT OMEGA (Adventure International); (16K) cassette, $14.95; (32K) disk, $24.95. TRS-80 program by Bob Nicholas. 1-4 players; playing time 4 hours per player. Can be saved. Published 1980.

Each player is given an L5 space colony with its basic workforce and a tremendous debt. You must set a number of variables (gravity, temp, composition of the atmosphere, etc.) and attempt to (1) pay off your debt, (2) amass $250 billion in assets, (3) get a stable population, and (4) build a balanced station. EVERYTHING you do interacts with everything else. Thus if you raise the temperature to improve the productivity, you increase the internal pressure which endangers the colony itself. Players have the ability to decide on so many factors it is impractical to detail them all here. Suffice it to say that you will have to solve many of the problems that would confront a top-level designer. You have lots of time, but every year the interest on your debt goes up another half percent.

The problems and their solutions (and the complications those solutions generate) all have a very realistic flavor. The instruction manual only gives players a framework and each must work out his/her own approach to the difficulties. There is a built-in "computer" that gives each player a projection for the next year of what the outcome of their decisions will be, but the projections have a deliberate error factor.

This game runs VERY slowly and there is no easy way to flip from one display to the next. Graphics are essentially nonexistent. But these are fairly trivial problems.

A first rate game. I highly recommend it.

–Jon Mishcon

PLAY BY MAIL

PELLIC QUEST (Conflict Interaction Associates, P.O. Box 383-C, Skokie, IL 60077). $19.50 for rulebook, setup, and first 6 turns; subsequent turns are $2.25. Designed by Thomas Carey, programmed by Robert Pellicore.

PELLIC QUEST is a licensed "spinoff" of Flying Buffalo's popular *StarWeb*. The similarities outnumber the differences; still, PQ is a distinct game, with its own strengths and weaknesses. Like *StarWeb*, PQ is a multi-player game (around 15 people per "universe") in which each participant takes command of an entire alien race, jumping between worlds in search of galactic dominance. Different player-types want different things; an Emperor wants to build an empire, a Crusader wants to convert others to his way of thinking . . . but everyone can build ships, and everyone gets to shoot up the opposition's fleets. Many of the changes in PQ are purely cosmetic: "Droyds" instead of "Berserkers," "Trader" instead of "Merchant." The map system is different in detail but identical in function; the same is true of the "artifacts." The big difference comes in fleet types. *StarWeb* has only one type of fleet. PQ has three, each with its own abilities. Assign ships to a scout fleet if you want speed, or to a battle fleet if you want combat strength – or to an all-purpose fleet if you want to carry cargo as well as fight. And there *is* cargo to carry – not just the generalized "RMs" of *StarWeb*, but population and even troops of different kinds. The fleet- and troop-types give PQ a tactical complexity that its predecessor never had.

Service seems very good. CIA guarantees that a player's turn fees will not go up during the course of a game. Turnaround is about three weeks – pretty good for this sort of game – and I encountered no computer errors during my play.

Any criticisms I have would be nit-picking. PELLIC QUEST works, and it's fun. It does not really "improve" on *StarWeb*; it merely takes it in a different direction, where tactics become more important. The "flavor" of the original game is basically unchanged, but in a combat situation there are many more factors that must be considered.

I'd recommend this to any *StarWeb* player who enjoys the original game and wants to try a variant – or to the tactics-oriented space gamer looking to "get his feet wet" in PBM computer combat.

– Steve Jackson

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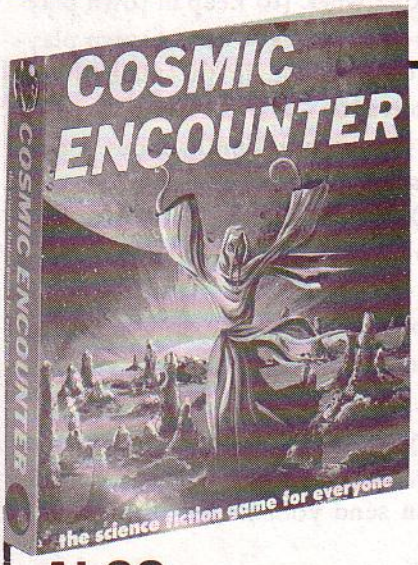

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StarMaster

Air screams around your ships as they enter the atmosphere. Missile-launchers fire deafeningly to port and starboard while atmosphere-fighters drop in shrieking dives from their hangers below. Warriors, tightly clenching their weapons, check their pressure suits one last time and climb in grim silence into their landing shuttles. In the distance five more heavy cruisers of your empire are firing and unloading their cargo, their hulls gleaming crimson in the light of the red sun above.

This is not a drill. Already laser and missile fire from the mile-wide guardian fortresses below have turned the sky into an exploding nightmare of smoke, fire, and fragmented metal. Planes and shuttles twist and dodge down towards a landscape rapidly becoming an inferno of flame and radiation.

This is no mere raid. For years your people had explored nearby systems without violence, trading technology to the primitive civilizations there in exchange for raw materials. Some species had even thought you gods.

Then you met the Aeratang. Merciless, brutal, they destroyed your exploring ships and began to slaughter your colonies. But you found their home planet and launched the greatest fleet your kind ever built to carry the war to your enemy. To fight for your very survival.

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The galaxies of StarMaster are a complete fantasy environment of solar systems, with geographies ranging from worlds near absolute zero to worlds where rivers of molten tungsten bubble, with technologies spanning from rock-throwing cave-dwellers to advanced Elder Races with near-godlike abilities.

Nor is the StarMaster environment limited in terms of playing area. There are multiple galaxies allowing for extra-galactic invasions across the voids. There are both natural and constructed gateways to (and from!) other dimensions and parallel universes.

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- Technology increases steadily, permitting faster, larger ships, deadlier weapons, and scientific breakthroughs.

The galaxies are dotted with the ruins of Elder civilizations lacking the strength to master the stars. Can you lead your world to greatness where so many others fell short?

StarMaster may be entered for $10.00 which includes the first three turns, a rule booklet, and all necessary material (except return postage). Thereafter, turns are $2.50 each.

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News & Plugs

Several correspondents have asked how we came through the floods which claimed several lives in Austin recently. We're fine, but for a while it was a near thing. SJ Games is located near Onion Creek, which twice overflowed its banks. The Fire Department advised us to evacuate, and there was a panic to get files and inventory stacked on the furniture. However, the flood was going down, even as we were being told to evacuate. The art director, stranded by high water, spent the night on the floor of the editor's office without getting wet.

Near Shoal Creek, the offices of Metagaming did get a little damp; however, insurance is expected to cover the damage to inventory. Central Texas Computing, downtown, and the local offices of T-Rex, on the north side of town, were not affected. Portions of Cedar Park were evacuated, but Martian Metals was never threatened.

FBI offers *Wargamer's Newsflash,* a service for gamers tied into The Source electronic mail system. Price: $25/year.

Valiant Miniatures has released a line of ancient warships under the name "Ramming Speed." No mention of any license from Metagaming.

The latest from Strategic Simulations: *The Shattered Alliance,* a "simulation of historical and fantasy ancient warfare." 48K disk for the Apple II. Price: $59.95.

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Eon Products has announced two more games: *Hoax* (2-6 players) and *Runes* (2-4 players).

The Midkemia Press offers *The Cube,* a computer version of Rubik's Cube. 48K disk for the Apple. Price: $19.95.

Grimoire Games has released *Arduin Adventure,* a boxed, introductory FRP set.

SPI has announced that its S&T games will no longer be published separately from the magazine.

Avalon Hill is reissuing its computer games on disk.

Yaquinto has released an SF "companion game" to *Swashbuckler.* The title is *Adventurer.*

Flying Buffalo offers a lifetime *StarWeb* game – you can play one game with no set-up or turn fee for as long as you both shall live. Price: $499.

Avalon Hill offers the "computerized novel" *Empire of the Overmind,* available for the TRS-80, Apple and Atari. Cassette $30, disk $35.

Programma International offers *County Carnival,* a different kind of shoot-'em-up game. 48K disk in machine language for the Apple. Price: $24.95.

Rumor has it that "Finieous Fingers" will be moving from *Dragon* to *Adventure Gaming* (with Kask, the evil wizard?).

TSR offers *Escape from New York,* a "family" boardgame based on the movie of the same name.

PBM Update

UNIVERSE III (Central Texas Computing)

Company News. Universe III is now open and accepting entries as a franchised version of *Universe II.* Initial exploration of Quadrant V has begun, with Quadrants VI-VII scheduled to open this summer and fall.

–David Bolduc

UNIVERSE II (Clemens & Associates)

Game News:

Quadrant I. Some starships are experimenting with using black holes as a rapid movement technique. The Etuel may be designing a new type of battle ship.

Quadrant II. The Ixtli have been luring Terran starships into traps. An attack on Zosma is being contemplated by one of the Terran alliances.

Quadrant III. The Muar Empire is actively attempting to expand their borders. Terran colonies are finding that they must be fortified to survive.

Quadrant IV. The Regajian Empire has successfully repelled all Terran attacks. The Blue Star Group continues to expand their base of operations.

–Jon Clemens

THE TRIBES OF CRANE (Schubel & Son)

Two major sieges were recently fought on Crane II. The first was an attack by seven tribes of the Warlords Alliance against the mighty city of Exxcel. The siege forces were led by Datan Kal, supreme city leader, and his alliance of defending tribes. After seven fierce battles, the city threw back the attackers to the outer siege works.

The second siege was an attack by the Knights of the Golden Circle on the city of Call. The Knights of the Golden Circle were commanded by Violets of Dawn. They also had the services of Jackson of the Stonewall, a master at sieges, on loan from the Grand Union Council of the Ancient Kingdom. A dozen fierce battles were fought and the Knights of the Golden Circle were successful in gaining control of a large portion of the city. Yet the city leader's palace walls still stand as an obstacle to their complete takeover of the city.

On Crane I the Nisa Island confrontation between the Grand Union and Dark Union continues. The barbarian forces under the Dark Union Master General Tabor were successful in ambushing the Grand Union forces repeatedly as they retreated to the south end of the island. To the north a strong Dark Union fort is under siege and completely surrounded by Grand Union siege lines.

STARMASTER (Schubel & Son)

In the Northeast Galaxy, the allied forces of the Crimson Imperium and Pandarus Imperium launched a surprise attack on their former ally the Sword of Xanidarr. The treachery caught the Sword of Xanidarr unprepared and the defense forces at Tektites 1 were overwhelmed. It appears the attackers wish to exploit Tektites 1's production capability.

In the Central Galaxy the Empire of Fire, the Federation of Supreme Beings, and Arachnet Pan Galactic Co., Prosperity Sphere and the Ninth Union launched a joint attack against the Loup Garu at Belar 5. A fierce space battle was fought. The attackers destroyed the defending ships and are now planning the planetary assault.

Company News. Schubel & Son will be releasing a complete new, entirely computerized boxing play-by-mail game July 1, 1981.

Rule Change for all Tribes of Crane players: The monthly possession rule for cities is being changed. From July 1, 1981 on, all tribes with 500 or more people will not receive an automatic 10% population growth in the city. Rather, population will remain unchanged. This rule will make the game more logical and realistic since previously tribes were being unrealistically supported by cities with populations very near the population of the tribe. Camping outside the city walls will still give you possible adjustments, depending on your herd size and surrounding terrain.

–George Schubel

PBM Update reports on professionally-moderated play-by-mail games. Notices are monthly. Copy deadline is 60 days previous to the first of the month, for the issue in which the notice is to appear. (Deadline for the March issue is January 1.) All copy should be typed and double-spaced. Notices should not exceed 200 words in length. TSG reserves the right to edit copy as necessary.

Letters

I am compelled to take issue with your review of Chaosium's *Dragon Pass,* appearing in TSG 40. In my opinion, you have done a great disservice to a large number of fantasy gamers who will never enjoy this game due to reliance on your review. I don't quarrel with your personal opinions; however, you have either misunderstood some rather clear rules or simply failed to read them.

I thought *Dragon Pass* to be a qualified success. Compared to the predecessor *White Bear/ Red Moon,* the rules are a model of clarity. The scenarios are well-conceived and balanced, offering both short and long versions. I have seen tournaments of Dragon Pass and I have been struck by the lack of ambiguity in the rules. The combat system is complex but creative, allowing rich tactical variation in what is essentially a strategic game. Best of all, it is another way to enter into and enjoy Greg Stafford's rich and perilous world of Glorantha.

Your exhibits in support of your conclusions are poorly chosen. While the combat rules are difficult – and I agree with you that they would have benefitted from inclusion of several examples – they really are in no way as confused and contradictory as you present them. By not quoting the rules in full, you have created ambiguities where none exist. You omitted that "melee" is a very special form of attack, with special rules, and that there are special rules for "retreat" before combat in melee. Thus your Exhibit A is not supported by the evidence.

Exhibit B is valid, in a technical sense. Yes, battalia sheets should have been included. But you had no great difficulty figuring out where the Barbarian Horde belonged. I consider this a rather minor point which does not detract from the play..

Exhibit C shows that you either did not read the rules or misunderstood totally. The Tusk Riders' ability is clear from 16.17, ". . . crossing forests and hills without trouble." The rules for Keener Than are clearly set forth in 16.14.1 and 16.14.4. While the Red Emperor's exotic ability is unclear, again, this does not affect enjoyment of the game – the primary standard, to my mind. (I presume the exotic power is that of summoning the Full Moon Corps.)

I believe it was an unfair remark to claim that *Dragon Pass* was improperly playtested. THIS GAME PLAYS WELL. I feel my five year wait was worthwhile. I hope many gamers will ignore your largely inaccurate criticisms, and share in my pleasure in playing this game. It is superbly designed, with excellent component quality. The charts and tables are clear. The diplomacy system is simple and provides a fascinating sub-game in itself. It has scenarios for beginners, experts, and marathoners. In my opinion, it is still the best of its kind, and belongs in any fantasy gamer's library.

I suggest that TSG would be better advised to submit its questions on the rules to Chaosium and print answers in the Game Master column for the benefit of all, rather than balloon them into such inappropriate judgments as "mitigated failure" and "not been blindtested."

Andrew J. Weill
Badger, CA

P.S. In fairness to your evaluation of my letter, I should point out that I playtested a very early version of *Dragon Pass* and have often conversed with designer Bob Corbett about subsequent changes, but the published version had never been playtested by me before publication. Thus I have no special "insider" knowledge.

Also, I should mention that I am in no way implying that the disagreements I have over this article reflect otherwise on your excellent magazine. In fact, it is because of my great respect for TSG, my reliance on its reviews, and my overall impression of objectivity in your work, that I feel compelled to express my opinion. Your reviews are powerful to your readers, and I believe your readers should have been given a more positive review of *Dragon Pass.*

OK, ya got me. I was wrong about Keener Than. I just plain missed the rule describing his placement.

However, with due respect to the abilities of Corbett & Stafford, the combat rules are poorly organized and contradict themselves in several places. It is true that "melee" is covered by a special rule. So is "retreat." There are lots of special rules, insufficiently reconciled with each other, and with the general combat rules.

It is true that I really didn't have much trouble with the Barbarian Horde. That is because I was an old WB/RM hand. However, I got several questions about the Horde from players who had not seen the game before.

The "rule" you are quoting on the Tusk Riders is from the commentary – "without trouble" is not sufficiently precise for a movement rule.

Your positive comments seem to echo my own.

You are indeed listed as a playtester.

I still do not think the game was blindtested. For more on the subject, see page 28, TSG 39.

–FJ

I was somewhat surprised at the review in issue 40 of the *ISCV Leander.* It seems that William Barton (who now does some copy editing for us at *High Passage*) and you both missed some very important points.

The *ISCV Leander* may not be the best *Traveller* product to come out, but I feel that it did not deserve the type of comments that were given when one studies the favorable reviews given to other products such as Group One's, which are way out of line in price and impossible to use in any *Traveller* campaign that is to make any sense.

Group One's deck plans have no grid, no doors on any rooms, the ship designs make no sense, and the tonnage is way off. Their characters are impossible to roll up.

As I said, the *Leander* is not the best, but if favorable reviews are given to vastly inferior products, the *Leander* should be given at least a fair rating.

Jim Cunningham
Oak Lawn, IL

Strong words, there. Does GI care to respond?

–FJ

We at FASA are, understandably, distressed having read your reviews of our products. We feel that the reviews concentrate on minor faults, some justified, while failing to mention any of the major attributes. FASA's deck plans are the first and only to provide such extensive detail, including every piece of furniture and all consoles. This allows the players to know room arrangements at all times so that in a gun battle, for example, they know where they could hide, or when objects are in the way while running, or shooting, or whatever the case may be. The cover art accompanying the designs portraying outside views of the ships helps immensely in their visualization. As Marc Miller, creator of *Traveller,* said, "FASA deck plans make adventures run more smoothly, faster, and better."

While the reviewers had questions about the realism of the ship's designs, it should be noted that spaceships of the future will be as individualistic as seagoing ships of the present, and Marc Miller said, "make the second edition plans infinitely more useful and interesting."

In general FASA products have been widely received and praised, and we were surprised to find such negative reviews in *The Space Gamer.*

William Ettelson
Vice President
FASA

Upon examining the newer editions of FASA's starship plans, the *Fenris* and *Leander,* which I reviewed, and the *Tethys,* reviewed by R.A. Edwards with whose conclusions I concurred, I wish to make an amendment to my own reviews. The new editions of these three ships show considerable improvement. Some of the plans and accompanying information have been reworked, missing letters have been added, faded lines darkened. Each cover sheet has a competent illustration now, making the package more attractive and less amateurish in appearance. Each of the three sets now includes a scenario pack, outlining short adventures for the referee's use aboard each ship. Altogether, these changes increase the value of each package to the point where I can now give them at least a qualified recommendation. Some players will probably still find the plans unnecessary, but the new editions should now prove useful to a wider range of *Traveller* players and referees than the first editions. I will stand by my reviews of those initial versions, but advise readers to take a look at the new editions before making their own decision on the matter.

It has also come to my attention that the missing USPs for these ships (still missing in the new editions) is due to their having been designed with *Traveller* Book 2 rather than *High Guard* and that the conversion to *High Guard* stats has proved difficult. Having experienced similar conversion difficulties myself, I can empathize with the problem and withdraw that objection to the products as well.

I think FASA should be commended for taking the efforts to improve existing products in this manner. Too many companies just don't seem to care.

William A. Barton
Brownsburg, Indiana

Stop running those damn *Lords of Valetia* ads. They, and others like them, are giving PBM a bad name. If you are still running them when my sub expires, I will not resubscribe, no matter how well I like your magazine.

Richard Carlson
Inkster, MI

Dear Steve Jackson Games:

I seen in your magazine how you are hiring people to work for you. So this is just to say that I AM YOU'RE GUY. You want guys for paste up work. I have been pasting up things since I was just a little kid (you ask Mom). As for games playing ~~exep~~ ~~xpi~~ ~~Exper~~ stuff, BOY am I the one you are lookhig for. I am the CHAMPEEN ; Chutes & Ladders player of the whole secnd grade (and if Larry Northrop tells you different he is a dirty liar, I woud have beat him easy if I hadn't acidentlly pushed the board over). You don't got to look no any farther so hurry and come and get me woud you please? My Mom is real mad becase I pasted some stuff over Larry Northrop's mouth and noze acidently while he was asleep and he nearly turnd blue all over before he got it off and now I want to come work with you guy's so I don't got to hide in the cloths hamper from Mom any more.

Love,

Allen Varney
(age 8)
Reno, Nevada

P.S. Please hurry. It smells ~~gross~~ in here.

Calendar

July 31-August 2: NANCON 88-IV. General gaming con. Send SASE to Nan's Game Headquarters, 118 Briargrove Center, 6100 Westheimer, Houston, TX 77057.

August 7-9: BABEL CON '81. Star Trek/SF con. Contact S.T.A.R. OKC, P.O. Box 565, Bethany, OK 73008.

August 8: DRAGONMEET IV. SF&F gamers con. Chelsea Town Hall, Kings Road, London SW3.

August 8-9: 5th ANNUAL BANROG AREA WARGAMERS CONVENTION. Contact Edward F. Stevens, Jr., 83 N. Main St., Rockland, ME 04841.

August 13-16: GENCON XIV. FRPG & new gaming releases. Contact GenCon XIII, P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva, WI 53147.

September 3-7: DENVENTION TWO. SF con. Contact Denvention Two, P.O. Box 11545, Denver, CO 80211 or (303) 433-9774.

September 4-7: GLASC VI. Simulation gaming con, including monster games. Contact GLASC Secretary, c/o L. Daniel, 20550 Wyandotte St., Canoga Park, CA 91306.

September 5-7: GATEWAY 1981. Strategy gaming con, fantasy & SF included. Contact Gateway, c/o Mark Snowden, 1864 Nutwood Pl., Anaheim, CA 92804.

September 11-13: DRAGON FLIGHT. A FRP con, to be held in Seattle. Contact The Brass Dragon Society, P.O. Box 33872, Seattle, WA 98133.

September 11-13: COPPER CON. Wargaming, FRP, video games, etc. Contact Copper Con, P.O. Box 11743, Phoenix, AZ 85061.

September 25-27: BABEL CON '81. Star Trek, F&SF con. Contact Steve Harrison, Babel Con '81, 1355 Cornell SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49506.

September 25-27: GALACTICON 81. SF con. Contact Galacticon 81, P.O. Box 491, Daytona Beach, FL 32015.

September 25-27: URCON III. SF and simulation gaming con. Contact P.O. Box 6647, Rochester, NY 14627.

September 26-27: GAMES DAY '81. Contact (SASE) Games Day '81, Games Workshop Ltd., 17/18 Hythe Road, London NW10.

November 20-22: CONTRADICTION. SF Con. Contact Linda Michaels, 27 Argosy, Amherst, NY 14226.

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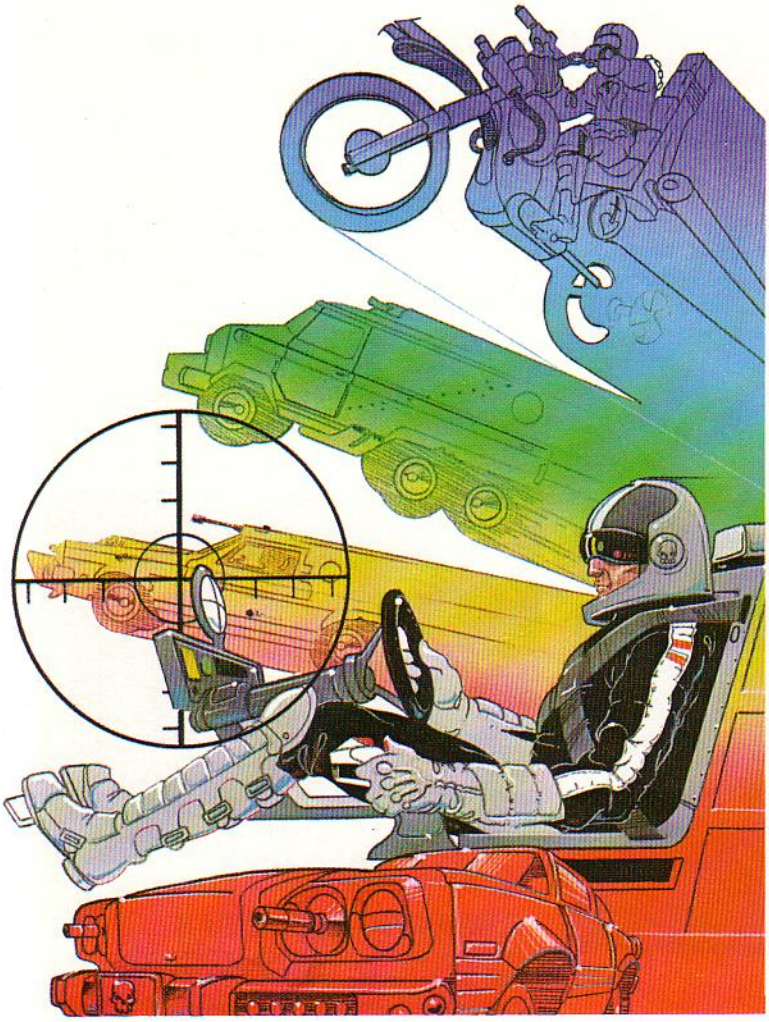

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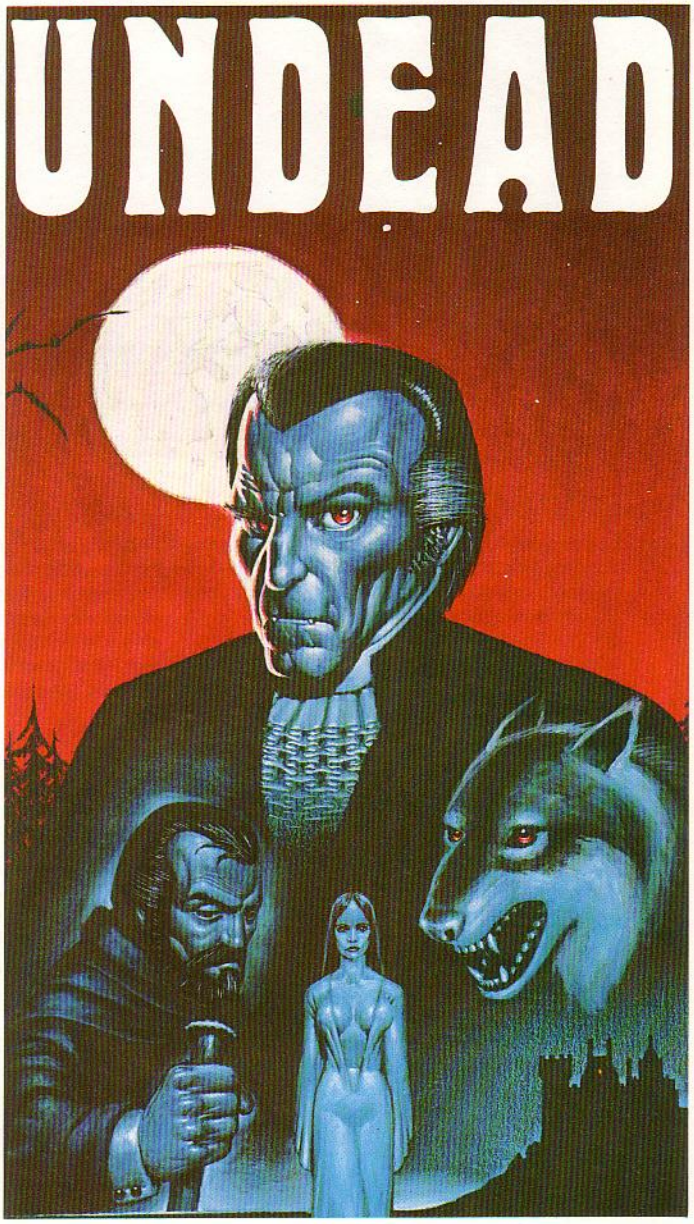

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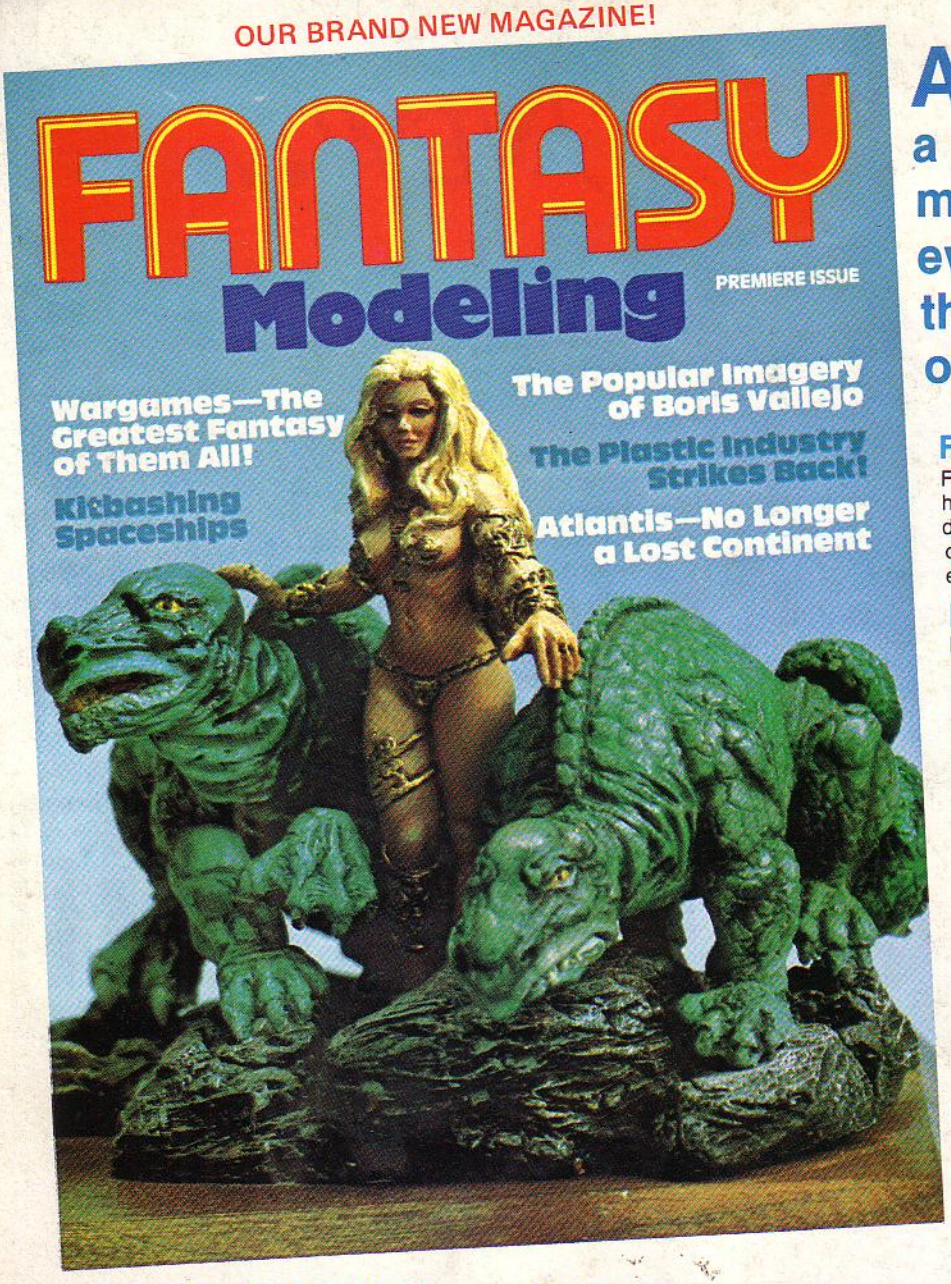

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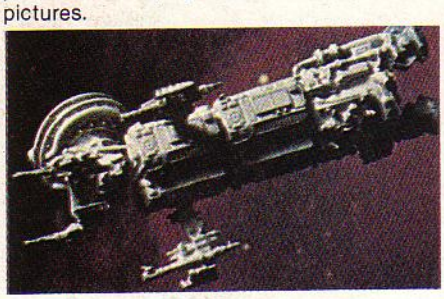

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